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# The Savage Brood

MARTHA REICHEART

*By the same author:*

FORTUNE MADE HIS SWORD  
GLENDOWER COUNTRY  
MY NAME IS SAPPHO  
THE ALEXANDRIAN  
THE SAVAGE BROOD

*The  
Savage  
Brood*

BY

MARTHA ROFHEART

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# The Savage Brood

by

MARTHA ROFHEART

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The Savage family is my own invention. No resemblance to other people bearing this name or to other theatrical families is intended. With the exception of obvious historical personages, all the characters in this novel are imaginary, and any resemblance to actual people, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

M. R.





*To Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt*



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BOOK ONE



London, 1536

## Chapter 1

There was a great crowd in the cobbled street, all headed in the same direction. It was difficult to go the other way, against the press of people.

The boy gripped his father's knitted hose below the tunic, fearful of being swept away and separated in the crush. Dimly he knew he should not hold on like that, tight-fisting, for his hand was sticky from the marchpane he had eaten earlier, at Aldersgate, entering the city. It was his father's best pair of hose, too, the players' part-colored, and this was the lighter one, the yellow, easily marked. But he was so small still, and frightened; he had never been so close to a crowd before, without the safety of a platform raising him, or a curtain hung between. The father half turned, smiled down at the boy, and gently loosened the hand, taking it in his. Sure enough, there was the mark, star-shaped and smudged, wrinkling the smooth cloth. Tears came to the boy's eyes, a hot prickling. He swallowed the sob in his throat. It was a small thing to cry about, on this day of all days.

For they were going to see his Uncle Beau hanged. And the mob of people that surged against them, parting roughly like a stream before a skiff, was going to Tower Green, to see the Queen's head cut off. The boy put his head down, so as not to see the excited faces, and clung desperately to his father's hand. His head ached. He was dully aware that the bells had stopped. They had been ringing since the gates had opened: Matins. It was a beautiful May morning.

It was a holiday crowd, as on a Fair day. And that was why they had to walk so far, their show wagon stopped outside the gate. They had been touring the market towns for a month now, all the players of the Savage troupe, except for poor Uncle Beau.

In the shock of silence after the bells, sounds came hollow on the air. A cake-seller crying his wares, slops emptying on the cobbles, a slow, distant pounding (the scaffold?), and a voice, near, the words lost except for "See the Black Crow." Why did they call her that, the Queen? The boy had seen her once; she was white, so white, like cream, or ivory, above her low white gown. Beautiful, too, he thought, like an image, or like Red Nell powdered to play a goddess.



He remembered her long, slim white neck, rising proud to a little pointed chin, and shuddered. Anne Boleyn: Nan Bullen, the King's Whore, the Black Crow. He had seen the King that day, too; King Henry, huge in yellow satin, filling the square inn door, huge face like a round unbaked loaf with tiny currant eyes and a prim mouth. Peering through a hole in a painted scene-piece, the boy had seen the King fondle his Anne, the plump womanish fingers pinching hard, leaving a red mark on the white skin of her arm, and she had laughed. And now the King was killing her, horribly. The boy wondered, suddenly, if his Uncle Beau's hanging had anything to do with the Queen; it was said that five men had died because of her, just days ago, her own brother among them. But no, he remembered; it was for slander that Beau Savage was dying, a risk all players took every day of their lives. Some clever words in a song and a little saucy mime to make the people laugh could cause a man's death.

And poor Fat Willie was hanging too, for acting the mime. He was only an apprentice, a big and somewhat slow-witted child with a sweet temper. It had been his first real part. The mime had been long ago, too, way before Lent, and nearly forgotten. The King had laughed at the time and thrown a large purse with ten goldpieces—a fortune. The mime had been about the King chopping off heads of the clergy, Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher. Fat Willie played the King in purple and a crown. He stumbled and stuttered, laying about with a big axe, and missing the necks—a typical foolery. And Beau, the darling of the crowd, sang the sly words to lute music and wild applause. Fickle as a god, the King had later sent his six tall soldiers, clanking in their steel suits, to the inn to take the two players away. That had been a month back, and the inn had closed soon after. Beau had lain in chains and his own filth till now, when they would hang him.

The pounding had stopped, and the press of people thinned out, except for a few who were going their way. The boy, young Edward Savage, saw Red Nell ahead of them, recognizing her by her property dress, green velvet with hanging sleeves, though her bright hair was bundled up in a coif. She turned then and waved, her big, pretty mouth beginning a smile; then the shamed blood flooded her fair skin, and she lowered her eyes, walking on. The whole company had come into the city to be with Beau in his hour, even the Old Lady, Edward's great-grandmother. But he could see none of the others; there were too many people gathered around the scaffold. Beau still drew an audience, even with a queen for competition.

As they came closer, Edward saw the nightmare shape of the gallows, black against the pure blue of the sky. He had to crane his neck, for it was a big, high platform resembling a stage; a rope hung there, thick and wickedly looped. Edward felt his hand gripped harder, and followed, pressing close to his father's side. Folk were parting before them to make an aisle. Some caps came off, but no one spoke. Silently, room was made for them, in the front row. Others of the family were there already, the Old Lady seated in the carrying-chair that had brought her, spreading out her wide, stiff skirts with her ropy old hands, and looking up at them, unsmiling. Edward, confused, bowed a little, as he had been taught to do. The old eyes looked a fleeting amusement before they moved away. Edward felt constrained, not daring to turn his head; there were no rules of behavior for this occasion.

From the corner of his eye he saw others, though, lined up and standing very still: big Walter Savage, his uncle, carrying his equally big harp; his grandparents, retired now and keeping the inn; a couple of apprentices with scrubbed faces, looking important; Red Nell again, staring straight ahead.

He stared, too, afraid of what he might see. But there was nothing at all on the platform except the gallows itself. Below, at the foot of the steps, was a little knot of soldiers, throwing dice. Edward let out his breath, windily; he had been holding it. His father bent and put an arm around his shoulders, holding him close. "Courage!" he whispered. Fine eyes smiled into his, brown and kind.

Richard Savage was a fine-looking man altogether, tall and well made, still quite young. He was straight-featured and thin of cheek, with crisp, curling brown hair under his fool's cap, and long legs like tree trunks in their bright hose.

He might have been a court gentleman, except for his dress and a certain air of tenderness and concern which lay about him always. This was due, in part, to the love he bore toward this one young son of his, this motherless and doubly dear Edward. The boy did not miss his mother, for he had never known her; she had died in childbirth. Nor did he miss her love, for there were plenty of company women to kiss and coddle him every day. Another boy, indeed, would have been spoiled by it. "But not my Ned," thought Richard, "not this boy, so small, so grave."

He looked into his son's face and smiled a little, not speaking. Edward was seven years old and thin-boned as a bird, with a baby bird's long, skinny neck. His brown hair was darkening already and would

be black like his mother's. He had her face, too, a long, pale oval, with delicate lips the color of watered wine. But she had been beautiful, thought the father, and almost sighed; this Edward had been named for his doomed uncle, but he would never be called Beau. The long little face bent somewhat to one side, and the long nose with it, and the left eye had a slight cast. But it was a clever face, and old for its years; a face you could talk to.

Richard spoke now, his hand still on the child's shoulder. "Will you wait here, Ned? I want a word with one of those soldiers . . . or do you want to go over beside Nell and stand with her?"

"I'll wait here, sir, if you please. . . ." It was a steady, small voice, the words spoken low but clear, and the accents pure. All the Savages had beautiful manners, like gentry. But then they were no ordinary players. They had played by invitation before four English kings. Even this hanging had been ordered by the Tudor Henry himself. It was a doubtful distinction, and it was doubtful if any of the Savage troupe had thought along these lines. They were a clannish sort, and Beau was much loved.

Richard was soon back. There were two faint spots of color across his cheekbones and a strange little edge in his quiet voice. Quiet as it was, many heard it. "They are waiting for a pardon," he said.

There was a kind of rustling surge, and a sharp cry or two; a woman sobbed. Nell, quick as a swallow for all her soft languor, was into Richard's arms, laughing and crying at once. "My God, Dick . . . and will the King pardon him? Oh, God, my God . . ." She crossed herself swiftly, and stooped to gather small Edward in her arms. Her eyes were wet and wild, and the coif had slipped from her head, letting her hair tumble down over her shoulders. True red it was, the color of the setting sun, and her cheeks were red, too, from emotion. She smelled like roses, and the boy thought she looked like one, too.

"Don't count on it," said the Old Lady, deep-voiced, from where she sat. "It's a fey king. . . . And get up, lass!" she added sharply. "It's company velvet you're wearing!" The girl, a distant Savage cousin, got to her feet and guiltily brushed at the knees of her gown. Her easy tears were drying already on her cheeks. "Here," said Edward, whispering, for he was afraid of the Old Lady, "here is your headcloth." She took it and stooped quickly to kiss him again, and then was gone, back to her place beside the old great-grandmother.

Something had happened to the crowd, though. The unnatural hush had lifted and there were shuffling sounds, clearings of throats,

and a snatch of words here and there. Then came tramping feet, and chains noisy against the wooden steps. It was Beau, walking half-hidden between his jailers. A ragged cheer went up from the scattered folk, and Beau answered in his familiar clear tenor. Shrugging off the hands that held him, he stepped toward them. Straight and tall and slender he stood, laughing, only a little pale from his weeks in prison. His yellow hair was combed and curled, his linen was white and starched at neck and wrist, and his black-and-silver doublet fitted without a wrinkle. Some rich merchant's wife had bribed the guards, no doubt, or perhaps it had been the Old Lady. Even from the country she could accomplish anything, Edward knew.

"My sweethearts!" cried Beau, stretching out his two arms to the farthest edge of the crowd and laughing still. They went wild, as they always did, stamping feet and clapping, throwing their hats in the air. He waited. "Sweethearts mine," he cried, into the expectant silence, "this is my last performance—"

There were groans and sobs, cries of "No—oh, no!" He waited again. "But—if it is my last . . . let it be my best!" There were cheers once more, and a little spatter of laughter, nervous.

"Who's for a song?" cried wonderful, high-hearted Beau. "A bar or two—a catchy air . . . and perhaps a jig or a morris . . . ?" And he stepped out, a jaunty little movement, toe pointed in his pointed silver shoe, and the big chain clanking with an awful merriment where it held his two legs together. He looked down and shook his head and laughed. "And will you have gallows music, too?" And the crowd, that had been holding its breath, roared in a wild rush of loving laughter. It was their Beau and he was wooing them again. "Go it, Beau!" they shouted, and "Good man, Beau!" A man pushed to the front, to the platform itself, a dirty fellow with a shock of ginger hair and muddy wooden pattens on his feet, and held up a rough-carved reed pipe. "Here you are, lad . . . here's your music!"

"Ah, a woodland Pan!" said Beau, and bowed, taking the pipe. "I thank thee, friend Pan!"

"Na-a-a," cried the fellow, shaking his shaggy head. "I be Matt . . . Matt a' Wessex! And she's a good pipe . . . made her myself!"

Beau eyed the long reed, and shook it to get the spittle out, adding a bit of foolery after for good measure. Pretending to have gotten a good splash in the eye, and then blowing his nose, he cupped his ear and hopped on one foot, all concern with the pipe and the spittle, and on and on till the laughter rose high and wild. He raised a hand to stop it, and in the hush put the pipe to his lips and blew. A



squeak and a puzzled look followed, then a squawk and a good shaking again. He frowned, while the people rocked back and forth with delighted laughter. Then once more—a huge blast and a look of triumph.

Edward's mouth stretched till it ached; he was grinning in spite of himself, along with all the others. Then, suddenly, before the laughter died, a cascade of rippling notes, sweet as birdsong, and a melody to set the feet tapping. And Beau's feet began tapping, too, in a little, soft dance, but delicately, so as not to set the chains to sounding. So sweet it was, and so magical, the little air and the brave, bright creature in its black and silver, lonely above their heads, that all grew quiet again; if a leaf had rustled, it would have been loud. And when it ended, on a sad, high note that hung in the air like a question, that wonderful applause erupted again, deafening and dear. There was in Edward's chest that same tight, bursting, too-big something that was always there on show days. And after, when he remembered, there was that dreadful glittering wetness that blurred his eyes. He blinked and swallowed.

Beau was calling now for strings. “. . . a mandol, or a gittern . . . strings to pull at the ladies' hearts . . . who'll give me strings?”

Big Walter, near, held his harp high. Beau laughed, shaking his head. “Not that, brother mine, I cannot hold it, it is alive!” Edward felt something being pushed into his hand and heard his father's voice. “Take it, boy! It is his lute . . . take it to him!”

The boy's head did not quite reach the platform; he held the lute above it and called out, “Uncle Beau—your lute! It is your own lute!”

Strong arms reached down and drew him up. Blue eyes, as shiny as bits of glass, met him with smells of soap and starch and lavender water; he felt a hot cheek against his own, and then heard a quick whisper. “Courage,” he said. “Courage, little Beau.” He was the only one who ever called Edward that! “It is nothing—it is over soon—courage!”

“The pardon . . . ?” the boy whispered.

Beau shook his head, smiling. “It will not happen. I have the Sight.” And he laughed, low. “I have the Sight—a gypsy taught me.” He caught the boy Edward under the arms, easily, and swung him high, over the heads of the watching people. “Look you, my darlings—here he is . . . young Ned—the youngest Savage—another Beau, but luckier. He will go far . . . and in another land, across mountains and water. A gypsy told me!” The crowd laughed loud at that,

for they knew, all, that Beau had been held fast in prison this last month. He let the boy down with a whispered, "Thank you, little one . . . get you gone now, and bravely!"

Beau stared out again, his hand up to still the laughter. "It's true, my pretties. A gypsy came to me in jail there . . . she who had the starching of my collar. Is it not fine? Fine enough for a fine gentleman? And so was she, the dusky lass . . . a fine armful. . . ." And he winked and strutted to set them laughing again. "And after, my pretties . . ." A knowing look and a pause to let it sink in, and "After, I gave her a bit of extra silver to read my future." And he pulled a long face, and shrugged. "And what do you think? I have none!" And he laughed merrily, did a little joyous caper, and shrugged, comically. "But never mind . . . The Savages have a future—and a long one—a glorious one. Here in fair England—and under foreign skies . . . and the boy Ned—little Beau—shall lead the way. So remember . . . it is as true as that I stand here. The gypsy—she was the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter and born on the banks of the Nile." And he rolled up his eyes in rapture, sighing languorously, and kissing his own fingertips, till they laughed again. And then he held up the lute, saying, "Who's for string music? A song . . . name me a song!"

Someone called, "'I saw the King on a summer's day . . . give Nan a—'"

Beau stopped it, crying, "Would you have me drawn and quartered, too? No, lads, I'll pay enough as 'tis. . . . A song! Come, another song, I pray you. . . ."

"'Here comes a chopper to chop off your head,'" cried a rough voice.

Beau shivered. "I like that a little less . . . though 'tis a royal death. . . . Come—a love song, a pretty tune . . . and you'll sing it along of me." And he struck up the old "Greensleeves," familiar to all. It went on long, for there were many verses added over the years, and the folk joined in, trilling as though it were a Fair day. Beau struck a last chord with a flourish of his lacy cuffs and bowed, hand over his heart, to where Red Nell stood in her green velvet gown. "And now, my Lady Greensleeves, come hop up here and give me a last kiss . . . come take away the gypsy taste!" And he reached down and pulled the girl up to stand beside him. "Nell Savage—to pleasure your eyes . . . Take a bow, lass!" And she swept a low, practiced curtsy, finer than any ever seen at court, settling her wide skirts skillfully so that they lay about her like a green, rippling sea. She rose,



smooth as a river swan, lashes long over sweet, downcast eyes, demure as any maid. Beau bent to kiss her hand, with another wink for his audience. He knew, as the Old Lady did not, that "Red Nell" was a password in the barracks and a byword in the night streets. But he kissed her with a will, and heartily, bending her supple back and catching a handful of her red hair in his hand, making the crowd whistle and catcall. In her ear he whispered, "Play it careful, girl . . . else you'll have but the one trade only . . . and another kind of clap as well."

She took no offense, for she liked the feel of his arms, and murmured back, "You know that if you'd wed me I would be faithful unto death."

"Poor sweeting—and that would not be long to wait. . . ."

The bright blood washed over her face again, for she had spoken without thought; she was not overbright, pretty Nell. She stood and stared at him, great tears welling and great white bosom heaving; he thought her a wonderful picture, Venus desolate, and smiled. "Get you gone, girl . . . you are the last woman I shall hold. Go, my goddess, and kiss them all for me!" And he gave her a lively thwack on the behind to speed her and get another laugh; then he put his fingers to his lute strings again, and gave them a song with a mournful air and French words, of Master Villon—the Paris jailbird, dead some fifty years now. Beau had the joke to himself, for, though they knew the tune, none knew its origin. Nor was the French easy to follow. "*Où sont les neiges d'antan?*" Between each verse he Englished that plaintive, and mortal question. They made nothing of it, too sad, and it set them to giggling nervously. And so, with a sigh, he swung into another tune, a country morris.

The ginger-haired fellow, in possession of his pipe again, knew the air and setting pipe to lips he blew it heartily; from all sides, voices joined, raised high, and someone began a rhythmic clapping. Suddenly, over all and cutting all off, came the dull roar of a cannon, then another, then a third.

One of the soldier guards rose from where he sat dicing, looked about, crossed himself, and said, to no one in particular, "It is done. The witch is dead. Now will the pardon come; the King has promised. . . ."

There was a single cheer, hushed as Beau held up his hand. He stood a moment, silent, then made the cross-sign on his breast and said, "So she is gone, our Nan . . . our douce and lively lady . . . God rest her soul. Pray for her, people . . . pray for your Queen."

And he dropped to his knees, the leg irons noisy on the boards, and bowed his head. And such was his power, and the power of that brave moment, that each of them, the hard-used of England who hated her, bowed a head or fumbled for his beads. And the little Edward's hand trembled in his father's, for he saw the flash of steel, ugly, and the white neck, so white, so small.

And now they were bringing in Fat Willie, and flinging him to his knees to pray also. He must have been in some other place, thought Edward, and not where Beau had lain this month; Fat Willie was filthy and his decent apprentice suit, good cloth made to last, was in rags, and barely covered him. Nor was he very fat now; the flesh hung on him sadly, making him look like an old, sick baby; his face was the color of dirty tallow, with great bruise marks under the eyes. The eyes themselves rolled wildly and he shook uncontrollably, setting his chains to jangling. It was all that was needed for the fickle temper of the audience; they guffawed and shouted in great good humor, a London mob again. Edward, craning, saw one of the soldiers, grinning broadly, poke at the poor, sniveling creature with his lance; was there to be no pardon for *him*, then? Edward was reminded of their performing bear; even through the bars of the cage there was always some urchin-held stick jabbing. But Willie was no bear, for bears got angry, you could see it in their eyes. And Willie's eyes were always empty.

"Way there—make way!" The guards were thrusting back some of the folk at the right, to let a little group of men through; as feet mounted the platform, the crowd gasped and fell silent, for it was the hangman, a figure known to all. Black-dressed as night he was and masked, with a close-fitting skullcap hiding hair and ears. His two helpers were all in red (like the old-fashioned Imps-of-Satan suits that were still kept, unused, at the bottom of an old trunk, thought Edward). There was a jumble of raised voices from the platform, for the soldiers seemed to be arguing excitedly with the new arrivals. ". . . I tell you we wait a pardon, the King's pardon . . ." ". . . overdue it is . . . the cannon was the signal." And, rising about them, the peevish tones of the Black Man, surprisingly thin and high, "I cannot wait . . . no waiting. I have the writ here—and there's another within the hour, a quartering. All the way across town it is, too . . . I'll not make it on time. . . ." As he spoke, he was moving about and giving orders. They had already dragged the quaking Willie up to his feet and were binding his hands behind him; a helper held ready the cloth that was to cover his eyes.

"A priest!" called someone from below, outraged, "You canna do wi'out a priest!" Other voices took up the cry. "A priest! A man of God! A shrive-soul!"

The hangman made a gesture, quick; they untied Willie's hands and stood holding him, one at each side. "Well—where is he? Where is the shave-head?" The hangman was a man of the New Learning, it seemed, with no use for the clergy. As were some others, too, for there was a scattered cry or two of "No monks . . . a pox on the Church!"

Another group of soldiers had appeared from somewhere and was arguing with the first; apparently all were denying responsibility in the matter of the priest, for none had been brought. ". . . we had the word for pardon . . . what would you?"

A small figure came out of the crowd and mounted the steps, barefoot; he was dressed in threadbare brown, too big for him, but a friar's robe. The thrown-back cowl showed a dark head, round as a ball, and crisply curling hair, shorter where the tonsure had grown out. He had a merry face, pulled into long lines now, and high red cheeks.

It was Brother Thomas, the Savages' own priest. Though he was not much of a priest, God knew—he had a wife and a little daughter that he would not give up, for he loved them. The Old Lady kept him for his learning, for she was fierce that none in her troupe should go unlettered; Edward had his Latin from Brother Thomas every other day, with numbers taught on the odd ones.

Brother Thomas went first to Willie, waving the soldiers away and taking the poor, frightened fellow to one side, speaking low, with a gentle smile and steady eyes. A little cross hung at his waist; he put it into Willie's hands. There was no wine or wafer, but a goodwife in the first row handed up a small loaf, and one of the soldiers offered his tankard of breakfast ale. Poor Willie had little wit, and perhaps was thirsty too, for he took a great draft of it, grinning when he heard the laughter. But he was quiet now and not shaking; he repeated the words after Brother Thomas. "*In manus tuas . . .*" Edward heard a woman sob, quite near.

And then a kind of rustling sigh went up from all the people, for they were bringing in the long bench where the condemned would stand; a soldier reached up and tested the rope. Edward saw Beau, on his feet now, standing to one side and watching with a strange little smile. They had lifted Willie, trussed up like a dirty bundle of old clothes, onto the bench, and were fastening the heavy iron ball-

weight to his leg irons; this was thought to be a mercy, for it guaranteed a snapped neck and no choking.

Beau shook his head at the iron ball, and asked to have the chains struck off. ". . . For I cannot go anywhere . . . and besides—I thought to *leap* into Eternity. . . ." After a moment and some wagging of heads and mumbling, they unfastened the chains; Beau leaped lightly to the bench and turned to face the people; they were very still, hardly breathing, for this was what they waited for, always; the last words that bridged the unknown.

"Good people," he said, not smiling now. "Do not weep for me; my road is yours, but that I take it sooner. Yet it is not too soon . . . for I die happy in your laughter and your love. Farewell, my sweet-hearts . . . remember me!" And he reached up swiftly, settling the noose about his neck. As the hangmen moved the bench away, he leaped forward and up, as though he would fly; he seemed to poise there in the air, toes pointed as in a dance, arms raised, and then he dropped; in the stunned silence the sharp crack was loud as a whip-lash.

Edward had shut his eyes; when he opened them, he saw nothing but two bundles, amazingly long and thin, that nearly touched the floor and spun gently, slowly. When the bodies were still, Edward saw that all down the front of Willie's loose jerkin and hose was a spreading dark stain. A flush stained Edward's thin cheeks, too; whether from sudden terror or from the draft of ale, poor Willie, at his death moment, could not hold his water.

There was no more laughter, and little noise; with a few words and scuffles and with eyes held away from the gallows, the crowd, in twos and threes, disappeared. Edward saw that the square was nearly empty, except for a thin scattering around the platform. It was the custom, after a hanging, to wait till the corpses cooled, for every now and then a poor wretch had been revived after, escaping the King's justice, only the worse for a pulled muscle or a sore throat. The hangmen had vanished, on to the next job, but the soldiers sat at ease on the death stage, sharing a tray of pasties, bought at half-price, cold, from a vendor in the audience. They were taking no chances; an escaped felon meant a lost right hand; let the rope do its work!

The Savage troupe did not speak either, but waited too, for they would take the bodies away for burial outside the City. Big Walter had rented the death cart already; ten shillings it cost, an outrage, and left over from plague days as well, the black crosses still not



faded from its sides. Edward saw the Old Lady raise her head and thought to hear her complain loudly in her heavy voice, but no, she beckoned to him. "You, boy! Little Ned! Come!"

He let go his father's hand; he had been gripping it all the while unknowing. He came to her side, stumbling a little, for his legs had gone to sleep. She turned her dark old stare on him, unblinking, reached somewhere in the folds of her skirt, and held out her hand. "Take it, boy!" He felt the cool round of it: an orange. A wonderful, rare taste; he remembered it still from Christ's Mass the year before. He ran his tongue over his lips; they were dry, so dry. But there was a hard lump still in his throat; he could not swallow. The Old Lady pressed his hand over the orange, a firm and tender touch. "Later, boy. Have it later." She startled him, her tone was so very gentle. The held-back tears welled over. "Thank you, Great-grandmama," he said in a whisper. "Courage, Ned," she answered.

He saw the bodies cut down and lowered into the cart; Willie's face was purple and frightening, but Beau was only pale. He might have been asleep, except for the odd look about his head, where it bent toward his shoulder sharply, like a broken branch.

They had got the little stubborn cart-donkey started already, and headed toward Aldersgate when a cry sounded from the gallows-place. It was a footman, dressed in the King's colors, with the Tudor Rose badge over his breast; he was no more than a lad, with fright showing all over his face. He looked down into the cart with sick young eyes, the freckles standing out sharply against his sudden paling. "What—Who shall take the King's pardon?" he asked, holding out a scroll with a purple seal.

"God's Nails!" said Big Walter, heavily. "You are something late!"

"I—There was a fearful crush," stammered the lad. "I could not see how to get through on foot. . . . There was a cookshop. I waited there. . . ."

No one spoke.

"A purse, too, I bear . . . from the King's Grace. . . . It was for Edward Savage, called Beau. . . ." You could see he had memorized the name.

"I will take the purse," said the Old Lady, holding out her hand. "I am Mother Savage, his grandmother, and head of the family."

The young footman stood watching them as they took their places behind the cart. Edward saw that he was crying. "Is he crying for Beau?" he asked.

"Not he," said the Old Lady, contemptuous. "He is afraid the King will hear of it . . . he will lose his place—or worse." She shrugged, and motioned for her chair to go forward.

Trudging slowly behind the rattling cart, Edward wondered who it was he hated most: the bloated peacock King, the laggard messenger, or loose-bladdered Willie, who had shamed them all.

He clutched the orange to his chest; a tear fell on it.

## Chapter 2

The little procession, headed by the death cart, wound its way through the narrow streets toward Aldersgate. The Old Lady, in her chair carried high on the shoulders of her two grandsons, looked down into the jolting cart and held up her hand, signaling a halt.

"Help me into the cart, Walter," she said, "I will ride with Beau."

Walter opened his mouth to protest, but a flash from her fine old eyes stopped him. He lifted her carefully over the cart's side. She settled herself on the floor, beside the dead men, taking her grandson's head into her lap. "That's better," she said. "His head was bumping." She smoothed the yellow hair at his forehead, her stiff, swollen fingers clumsily gentle, her dark old face brooding. "Drive on!" she commanded. The wave of her hand was almost a flourish, for she too had been a player all of her life. Until now, until a few months back, when the bad humors had settled in her joints and crippled them. Now she could hardly move, and was in pain more often than not. The wooden cartwheels, going over the uneven cobblestones, rattled her poor bones dreadfully, but she settled her face in a stoic mask and rode on. It was Beau's last ride, after all.

The Old Lady had been christened Isabelle, but almost none of the troupe remembered it any more; she had been old so long. The Old Lady was the great-granddaughter of the very first Savage, Moll, who had been the mistress of Henry V, the victor of Agincourt, in the last century. She even remembered Moll, who had lived to a great age; when the Old Lady was a child, the once beautiful Moll was then an ancient withered crone. "*Tempus fugit*," she thought sadly, airing her Latin.



The Savages were the most famous acting troupe in all England, for a century now the favorite of kings. Even *this* king, the eighth of his name and the wickedest, had once adored them, and even now it was at his command, and no lowly one, that Beau had been condemned. The Savages were almost, by now, royalty themselves, or considered themselves so. All of them, except Nell, knew some Latin, and even Nell could read. And each of the Savages knew, by heart, the Savage history.

It was true that Moll Savage was the fifth Harry's doxy; she lived in his tent on the battlefield for two years, right up to the time when he married the little French princess Katharine of Valois. Moll was a port girl, from the waterfront streets of Harfleur. After the town fell, the girls who survived were rounded up by the conquering English and put in a camp all together, for the soldiers' convenience; it was called "The Camp of the Maries." No one remembers Moll's true name, for in those early days she spoke, like the other girls, only Breton French, with a few pungent sailors' swear words. All the Maries had nicknames, to tell them apart, and to describe them, such as "Petite Marie," "Marie la Rouge," or, in rougher English vein, "Fat Mary" and "Molly Big-Tit." The Old Lady's ancestress, whose eyes were long and wicked, and whose nails were longer and wicked, became "Marie la Sauvage," or "Moll Savage." She was a wild French partisan, never mind her calling; in her first camp days, many an English Goddam, as the soldiers were called, wore a scratched cheek, or a finger bitten to the bone. The King had not been named "The Tavern Prince" for nothing; he laughed and called her his "Black Panther," for she had a vivid, dark look, like a very gypsy.

When the King had wearied of her and renounced her for his royal bride, he was generous as only a great-souled conqueror can be. He set her up in an inn of her own, or some say bawdy house, with his own Lancaster arms above the door. Whatever it was in those days, plays and all manner of bold entertainments were performed there, in its large courtyard, and it was there that the troupe of Savages came into being.

For Moll was wed with the King's own Fool, the famous Sir Hercules, a little man no bigger than a half-grown boy, and with a carven grin upon his face.

And so the inn began to be called The Panther and the Smile, for her dark, smoldering beauty and Hercules' perpetual smile. For years a great sign hung above it, of a toothy black beast; on windy days its

creaking drowned out the players' words, and rose, rude as a dragon's belch, above the music.

Sir Hercules never knew his name either; at home he had been called "You, there," or "the little 'un"—in Navarrese, of course, for Navarre was his birthplace. He never grew properly; his father sold him to some ragtail jongleurs for a small piece of silver. It was a good bargain for those player folk—in a year they had made it back a hundred times over. Their "Little Flea" was a sensation in all the market towns of Navarre. He learned quickly—pipes, the lute, a repertoire of simple minstrel songs, tumbling, dancing, and some juggling, too. He was happy, for these player men and women were easy and kind and fed him well. But, alas, he began to grow. Not much, but too much for a flea. They had to part with him, the women in tears. They sold him at a good profit, the price of two bears and a talking bird, and were consoled.

His next master was more enterprising. It was he who carved the grin, the badge of his calling. This type of mutilation was not uncommon in those days, for many a mountebank had a slit nostril, a missing ear, or a pair of bulging eyes, the better to capture trade and gather laughter. It was not a squeamish age.

The grin, once it had healed, worked its magic, and the little man became famous. Within a radius of a hundred miles there was no performer more beloved. He no longer did the haphazard turn, holding out the cap afterward for coins; now he played proper parts in proper plays. These plays were stories of the lives of saints, but they had long since lost their edifying points. Their stars were their villains, so to speak, those wicked, comical, lovable imps of Satan's train who tormented the poor martyrs with fiendish glee, capering and somersaulting, singing and dancing, right up to the very gates of Hell itself! It was the custom to call these imps by the names of pagan gods and heroes, to discredit them in good Christian eyes. By a kind of reverse describing, the little man became Hercules, and the name stuck; it was the only one he ever knew.

His fame spread; he became the greatest of all the imps, folk flocking to see him each saint's day. In the courts, too, they paid much money for his services, though of course he saw none of it, except for his board and keep. His master, however, grew fat and indolent, and wearied of the exacting trouper's life. He sold Hercules to the Duke of Navarre for a small fortune.

This Duke kept him there on his duchy for some years, enlivening his court on long nights. When his daughter, the Lady Joanna, mar-

ried, Hercules was her most treasured marriage portion. She took him with her to Brittany, where she wed first, and then, when that husband, an old duke, died, she took Hercules to the English court as a present for her new spouse, himself the new king. This was Henry IV, who had usurped the throne and founded the dynasty of Lancaster. His son, Henry V, inherited the famous Fool, Hercules, along with the throne. It was he who knighted the little man, for bravery upon the field of Agincourt, and he, as well, who gave him his cast-off whore, Moll Savage, for wife. The Savages attributed their remarkable talents to this Sir Hercules, for Moll was not much of a player, though she lent a vivid beauty to the stage of the inn courtyard, and her status with the King brought custom.

A daughter only was born to them, another Moll, and trained early to singing and dancing. Sir Hercules Savage (for he had taken his wife's name) died young, like his king, while taking his bows on-stage. He was much mourned, and laid to rest in an unmarked grave, near to his benefactor's, but in unconsecrated ground, as Church law prescribed. All the same, many prayers were said over him, and for the whole of the century his little tomb had been a pilgrimage place for all the players of England.

The second Moll Savage married a Welshman, an exile like so many others after the wars; he was a grandson of the great Owen Glendower, the rebel leader. This Owen had been the descendant of the three princely lines of Wales, so young Rhisiart ab Rhisiart ab Owen, or Dick Richards in English, had his own royal claims. They were all he had, though, save for a battered old seal with a dragon on it, a kind of lithe, ragged elegance, and a fine singing voice. He took over his wife's name and the company purse strings; Dick Savage was the first actor-manager.

The old morality plays were dying out, unpopular even on high holidays; England was torn by the Wars of the Roses and the people wanted their comedy spiced with politics. Dick Savage made his own songs, dangerously close to sedition, but cunningly disguised, like the fables of Aesop, in animal tongues. He was known as the Fox, or Foxy Savage, and his songs were sung all over England.

There were no sons of this marriage either; twin daughters bore the Savage name and gave it in turn to their husbands. These girls were christened Gwen and Gwynneth, but they were so very beautiful, after the manner of church images, with voices so pure and sweetly clear, that they were called always the Two Belles.

Their sons—for with them the curse was lifted—were called, as

often as not, and interchangeably, Beau. The French wars had familiarized all Londoners with French names, and it has cropped up often since, down the generations. Belle, too, or Isabelle, was a favorite name; the Old Lady was not the only one to bear it. She was granddaughter to the Welshman and remembered his sly songs well, thinking, as she rode along, that they were not so very different from the song that had sent her beloved grandson to his death. A pox on Old Foxy, she thought. It was he who sowed the seeds of dissension in our line! A pox on all the Welsh! Mostly she was proud of her Welsh heritage and its princes and princesses and its fine rebels, but it could go either way with her; today she wiped away a tear, spat over the side of the cart, and made the cross-sign, upside down for hexing, toward the borders of Wales, far away.

They had come through Aldersgate, jolting and clattering all the way, the cart noisy; no one of them had spoken, except to give their names at the gate. Outside the walls, the houses thinned out, and more and more new green showed, fresh and dainty in the crisp noon light. A little rise came in sight, covered with yellow buttercups and a leafy tree or two. The Old Lady pointed and cleared her throat. "There," she said, her voice rasping from disuse, "there, beyond that small hill, lies the burying-ground. Not far now."

At length they came to it, a cleared space, brave with flowers and fine-graven stones. It was a goodish size already, for all the Savages, except for the first, Sir Hercules, lay here under the stones, gathered close. Walter lifted the Old Lady out of the cart, setting her down carefully onto her waiting chair. "A peaceful place," she said, and almost smiled.

Young Edward did not think so, for two great holes gaped, greedy, for Beau and Willie, and long, narrow boxes lay beside, waiting. The Old Lady dug into the purse at her belt and brought out two coins, one each for the coffin-maker and the grave-digger, who had finished their tasks hours before. "How did the Old Lady know?" thought Edward. The King had meant to pardon Beau! Perhaps she had the Sight; indeed, he was sure of it, quailing at the thought. He did not dare cross himself, for she was looking at him.

"Eat your orange now, boy," she said. A great kindness was in her voice, so that Edward nearly sobbed.

He shook his head. "Afterward," he said, just getting the word out.

Her old eyes stared. "Better now," she said. "I'm tired. I'll rest



now. And then we'll bury them . . . and Brother Thomas will read the Latin words for their souls. . . ."

And so it was, for no one dared gainsay the ancient matriarch. They sat, uncomfortable in the graves' nearness, and hot in the brilliant sun, and munched bread and cheese from their leather wallets, along with tepid wine. The Old Lady finished an orange of her own, spitting seeds and skin all around her, wiped her hands upon her muslin apron, and nodded to Brother Thomas.

When the words had been read, the tears shed, and the bodies lowered into the graves, the Old Lady threw in a handful of dirt. "Dust to dust . . ."

The great holes were filled in, quickly, with all the men turning to with spades, and a wooden marker, temporary, set in the earth above them.

"I have commissioned a stone," she said, "with the King's money."

No one knew when she had done it, or if indeed she had, but none questioned her; she was the Old Lady.

"And now," she said, "push on . . . to the North. We will head for the Northern shires. . . . Players must eat. . . ."

## *Chapter 3*

Here in the North, there were signs everywhere of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Worse still were the evidences of the reprisals taken against the Pilgrims by the King's men. What had started as a peaceful protest, when met with violent measures, had turned into bloody rebellion and repressive punishment. There was not a crossroads without its stinking gibbet, or a town without its Traitor's Gate. Bleached bones hung from city walls, and rotting heads grinned whitely from poles in every marketplace.

Mysteriously, word of Beau's execution had spread in all these parts, even to the smallest hamlet. Moreover, in the eyes of these simple country folk, Beau had died a martyr. It was useless to claim that Beau had only sung a clever rhyme, meant for clever ears—a bit of licensed foolery that for once had gone too far. Beau had spoken out for the men of God and for the commons, against the King's iron

justice. Poor witless Willie, too, was near worshiped here. Many a tattered fellow, looking over his shoulder, begged a bit of rag from Willie's costume, or a lock of Beau's yellow hair. Players all thrive on the commons' love, but, alas, the love of these would buy no bread. Those poor people that were still alive after the punishments could not easily feed themselves. Dispossessed of land and living they were, their tenure gone with the seized lands of the abbeys and convents.

It was not known how the Pilgrimage of Grace had begun, or who it was that had called it that. But here in the Northern counties it had started, and spread like a moor fire to all the shires of England. The King and his wily Cromwell, Keeper of the Privy Seal, the Lords Norfolk, Howard, Seymour, and the rest, had gone in with might of arms and men to all the clergy holdings, the little abbeys as well as the rich ones, dispersed the monks and nuns, sometimes with blows or worse, and had taken all their holdings from them in the name of the Crown. The tenants lost their homes as well, if they could not pay the Crown tax. Few could, for the peasant farmer has no coin, but pays his rent in kind, or labor.

These poor small farmers and loyal parishioners, outraged at the treatment meted out to their holy ones, and with little to lose anyway, had risen and marched against the King's men. They were not armed with sticks or axes, but with slogans and songs, and cloaked with their conviction and their faith. They were met at once by sword and mace, the iron hooves of war horses, the gallows, and the executioner's knife. The high-minded folk who had led them, Lord D'Arcy and the gentleman Robert Aske, lay even now in the Tower, awaiting their punishment: Lord D'Arcy was sentenced to the traitor's block and the axe, and Aske would be drawn and quartered as a felon.

The little Savage troupe with the great show wagon, the carts and the animals, climbed the rise slowly. They were hot and tired; it was the twenty-fifth of August, and they had been three months away from London. The town over the bend of the road was a place called Saxeby-on-Saxe, for a dried-up stream twisted through the valley below and climbed alongside the road. It was to be hoped the town had an inn, or at least an ordinary with outhouses, for they had spent the last three nights in the open, and the Old Lady's sore joints ached from the damp.

The Old Lady, though she had buried two husbands, had conceived by only one, and one child only: the father of Richard, Beau, and Walter, her grandsons. Accomplished in her craft, like all her



kind, she knew her letters as well, and could do sums swiftly in her head. Her skillful dancing was legendary, but now her joints were stiff and painful, and even walking tired her.

No one but Beau had ever dared call her the Old Lady to her face; it was he who had given her the name. He had come back from an off-season trip into wild Wales, and had told improbable tales of little dark hill people who lived in caves, painted themselves blue like the old Britons, and had for queen an ancient crone they called the Old Lady. "For your Welsh blood, Grandmère, that you are so proud of," said Beau, bowing low till his forehead grazed the ground at her feet, "I shall dub you Queen of the Mountain . . . our Old Lady!" It was not even so very funny, really, but the grandmother's dark eyes had flashed so fearfully and Beau had laughed so delightedly that the name had stuck—inside their heads, at least.

She rode now, at the end of the day, on a donkey; Edward, carried in his father's arms, went before. On the rising ground he could look down upon the woman seated sideways on the beast. He thought their eyes looked much alike, round, peevish, and with yellow whites.

It was hard to know what the Old Lady was thinking. Just now she was sad, dwelling on Beau, gone forever, her aching bones, and the money paid out and none coming in. Actually they were well off—for players. But, like all misers, she dreaded the feel of an empty purse. She sighed. There were only a few coins left, clinking together, in the gift purse from the King. Another week and it would be used up. She did not think of the bulging stocking at the bottom of her trunk; that was for extremity. And the considerable sum held by the Jew in London was capital. Never would she touch that, for Samuel paid a fee for the holding of it, collected biannually. "Trust a Welsh woman to get the better of a Jew!" So Beau had said. A tear slipped down her cheek. Thus, she thought, with the leanness of the purse, they would soon be penniless. She belched a little, sadly. Another tear slipped down. Edward watched, amazed.

Beyond the hill a sizable town came into view, with a wall. True, the wall like the road had been built long ago by the Romans, and in spots it was fallen or crumbling. But it was a wall still. They were in luck, for such a place was bound to have travelers and accommodations. Chances were there was a fair-sized marketplace, too, and maybe even an audience. They stepped out more smartly, their spirits on the rise. The Old Lady thrust the purse deep into her skirt folds, and sat up straighter.

Before the road reached the town proper, there were a few small

cottages scattered along it, poor, small buildings, each with its little plot of garden where stunted corn drooped in the dusty heat. Folk came out of the houses to stare, curiously; Edward saw a boy about his age, naked as the day he was born, round-eyed, with a finger in his mouth. The folk here were like such cotter folk everywhere, shapeless bundles, dun-colored and unbelievably dirty. The animals of the troupe that walked tiredly after a day's journey or lay panting in their cages had eyes brighter than the human eyes that watched them. They were probably better cared for, and certainly better fed.

Though nothing about them changed or seemed to quicken, the people watched until the little procession had passed. They did not show it by their looks, but they would remember the sight always, for they had never seen anything like it in their lives. They saw a great lumbering vehicle, pulled slowly by two huge, glossy-coated horses, but twice as large as the plow horses lent by the lords and larger even than the palfreys those same lords rode to battle. And all about these beasts, circling their great shoulders and stretching back to the show wagon, were brightly-dyed leather harnessings hung with dozens of tiny bells, making a merry noise at every step. The wagon itself was as large or larger than a dwelling, high and wide. It was gaudily painted with flowers and people and animals, and hung with flags; a coat-of-arms was emblazoned upon the roof crown. On a little seat up front sat a brown monk, holding the reins.

Behind came several carts, all loaded high with bundles, pulled by donkeys. On top of one, among the gear, sat a sweet-faced young woman with a sleeping child. This was Brother Thomas' wife, Sarah, and their little girl, called Thomasine. Then came another wagon, with cages, all empty except for one filled with small excited white dogs yapping through the bars and another that held a spotted big cat that slept with its paws over its face.

Two half-grown children, one a girl, darted among the wagons, laughing. A young woman shushed them, frowning. Another young woman, very pretty with red hair, carried on her shoulder a small sad-faced monkey, dressed like a man; she waved and smiled. Nell. There was a cow, too, and penned chickens, a cage filled with bright birds, and, walking alone, daintily, a small beautiful horse, black as night. Then came Richard with Edward in his arms, the Old Lady, staring back at the cottagers from her donkey's back, and Big Walter, leading a muzzled brown Muscoby bear. Two young apprentices brought up the rear, scuffling their shoes in the dust.

All these traveling folk were richly dressed in bright, bold colors,

with gold at their ears, and the women had uncovered hair. "A rare lot, that," said one of the cottagers, spitting into the dust. A woman made the sign against the evil eye. After they had passed, a clod of earth struck the ground behind them. They took no notice.

There was an inn. It was small by London standards and old, but it had a stable and a courtyard, too. "Another time you folk 'ud have it all to yourselves, and welcome . . ." The innkeeper had come out into the yard to explain. "For I seen a show when I was a lad . . . And seeing you keep an inn yourself . . ." The Old Lady had pointed out the royal arms and the inn name, *THE PANTHER AND THE SMILE, LONDON*, that was painted upon the carts, and was waiting, as cool and gracious as royalty herself, atop her donkey. "But my best room—it's promised to yon gentry." And the innkeeper jabbed a thick thumb toward the open door of the common room where two figures sat, dark against the flames of the hearth place. "Ordered a fire they did, too—in August! Foreigners by the look of them . . . but gold is gold . . ." And the innkeeper shrugged his fat shoulders.

The Old Lady edged her donkey up to the door and looked in. "Italians," she said, turning back and beckoning to Walter to lift her down. "Spies," she thought to herself, for Privy Seal was known to employ all sorts. "Must go carefully . . ." They had nothing to hide, but it did not do to be rash. Remember Beau!

"And now," she said briskly, "now to business. What will you pay?"

The innkeeper stared, pop-eyed. Walter, having set her down with care, grinned and left them to it. He knew that, despite the vicious stabbing in her swollen ankles, the Old Lady would drive a hard bargain.

And so she did. In the end it was agreed that they should have room and board, stabling and fodder, as well as half the door take, in return for an afternoon show not counting what might be garnered by a caper or a song and a held-out cap afterward.

The light would fade soon; there could be no show today, and little to do but see to the animals, which must come first. Edward was thirsty. Their drinking-water had gone tepid and brackish on the road, and the mouthful of wine he had had with his meal at midday had only made his mouth furry. He looked longingly at the well, standing cool in the shadow of a great tree, but turned resolutely to the cage of little dogs, his chore. Nervous little beasts, they were whining and yammering more loudly than ever, standing up on their strong trained little back legs and thrusting their pointed noses

through the bars. They had to be fed and watered one by one, for they could be trusted only at their show tricks; he would have to beg a pannikin from the inn wife. Edward heard Sarah, the priest's woman, coughing again. She would wake her little Thomasine, who would trudge about after him, Edward, trying to help, and like as not get bitten. Well, she was another chore, his personal one, after the dogs. He crossed the doorsill, blinking in the dim light of the common room. It struck cool after the heat of the road; he shivered, pleasantly.

"Come here, little master," called one of the foreign gentlemen. "Warm yourself by the fire." To Edward's trained young ears the voice had a beckon in it, soft, accented, curiously comic; he was a natural mimic. Seldom fearing strangers, he went forward easily. "I am not cold, sir," he said, making a little bow, "but the fire is pretty."

The strangers looked at him, charmed. He was such a jauntily tricked-out little figure, like a cunningly carved boy-doll, and with such a sweet, grave face—a face such as the new drawing-masters were giving to their painted Christ children, oval, large-eyed, framed in cloudy hair.

"You are not from these parts, little master?" said the second gentleman.

"No, sir," Edward answered. "I am a player." He was not, not yet—but there were none of the company to hear his lie. Besides, more than once he had been pressed into service as a Cupid or a Ganymede. Still, he crossed his fingers behind his back.

"Ah, so . . ." the stranger nodded. "I might have known. And that is your great painted wagon that creaked so bravely?"

"Yes, sir. *Ours*, sir," Edward said, truthfully. "I am a Savage—Edward Savage."

Both men nodded, and tried it out on their tongues. "Savage . . . Saviggi. Eduardo Saviggi . . ."

Edward, polite, did not smile at the strange twisting of his name, but nodded, gravely. "Yes, Master Lawyer," for such he took them to be.

"We are not lawyers," said the first gentleman, laughing, "but clerks only."

Edward studied them, curious. They were not clean-shaven, as were English clerks, but wore courtly little pointed beards and, odder still, great sweeping mustaches curling upward at the ends. Their



dress was clerkly—flat red bonnets and short, swirling red capes over black doublets and hose; square writing-tablets hung at each belt.

Edward was too polite to ask their business in these parts. Instead he said, shyly, "I hope you will be here tomorrow, masters, for we perform: dances, songs, perhaps a play as well." He had no real idea what the show would be, for they had no fixed repertory, but tried to suit local taste.

The clerks looked at one another and nodded. "We could perhaps stay on . . . We are early enough," said the first, the darker-complected of the two.

"We are bound for the new properties of My Lord Seymour," said the other. He was younger, with a reddish beard and lively eye. He spread his hands and laughed. "My Lord has little Latin, and there is much to be tallied and valued . . . it was an abbey, not so long ago, and the monks were very thorough in their accounts. The new Queen, they say, is very learned, but her kinsmen are more soldiers than scholars." At this his companion gave him a great dig in the ribs and a frown. Edward looked away, for he had no wish to involve himself in grownup secrets. He knew, of course, that the King had taken Jane Seymour to wife, and would have liked to ask how she looked, but the Old Lady had forbidden any of her charges to speak of royalty, either onstage or off. But the ginger-beard was blithe and did not curb his tongue. "Learned she may be, the Lady Queen, but her French is not as good as the King's, and she has no Italian at all. She could not, when we were presented, give us greeting in our own tongue."

Edward stared. Italian! He had taken them for Welsh! Italy was a thousand or more miles away, to the south. Edward's geography was vague. He only knew the Pope lived there, for Brother Thomas had told him. His eyes lit up. "We have a talking bird from Italy—I think. Or maybe it is Africa . . . I forget. But we have a play—a Pantaloon . . ."

At this the two Italians began talking at once, flashing white teeth and waving their hands about. "Pantalone—Pantalone the Venetian!" "Ah—the comedy!" "Our Padua has no characters . . . but still we have a company of comedians . . . we are from Padua, from the University . . ." "The best comedians, though, are the Florentines." "No—Venetians!" They lapsed, then, into their own tongue, which seemed, as another language always does, to be very rapid and loud. They broke off, seeing Edward's bewildered look, and, smiling, the men bowed. "Your pardon, young sir . . . we are Italian, from

Padua. This is Messire Enrico Franconi, and I am Bellini, Marco Bellini."

Red-beard asked, "And shall we see your Pantalone tomorrow? Who is he? Does he speak English?"

Edward was confused; he had thought it the name of the play. He had seen the comedy once only, in London, two years back, and remembered nothing of it, except that it was all in dumb show. This he told them, explaining. "I remember a long nose—and a gray beard . . . would that be Pantalone?"

"I am Pantaloon," said a deep voice, behind. It was Walter, carrying little Thomasine. His wife, Jenny, followed, her arms full of bright silks and velvets, and looking as though she were ready to scold, as usual.

"Your little hell hounds are barking up the dead," boomed Walter. "Get you to your work, boy! And take Thomasine with you before *she* begins to bark, too!" He let the giggling child down gently, ruffling her hair, and giving her a play push. "Go, child, busy yourself."

Edward bowed and turned, guiltily. He had forgotten the dogs. He almost ran, the little girl at his heels. Behind him Walter's voice rose, rich and rolling. "Pantaloon, sirs—at your service! Walter Savage, the one and only English Pantaloon . . ."

Edward, his whole small arm lost in the great padded glove that hung always from the cages, reached in and caught a wriggling dog, squeezing it through a small gap in the cage door before its fellows could escape. Little Thomasine, by no means as useless as he thought her, banged the door firmly, and squatted on her fat little legs to portion out the meat scraps she had begged from the inn wife. "Look at the greedy-guts!" And she shook her curly head sadly.

"They're all alike," said Edward, philosophically. The dog choked on its water and gulped down its meat whole, tail wagging. He shoved it back into the cage and hauled out another, identical. Edward marveled, as always, that these witless little beasts could be so wonderfully clever at showtime, and all on command.

"Let me!" cried Thomasine, impatient. "You will never finish!" And she snatched the squirming bundle from his glove, holding it by the scruff of the neck, as Walter did. With her other hand she gave it a sharp crack across the nose. Surprised, the dog sat down, perfectly still. After one reproachful look, it bent docilely to its food.

"Do them all!" said Edward, a little miffed. "You're welcome to it!"



He watched her as she finished, her five-year-old face very intent, her small hands busy as a housewife's. When they were all fed and back in the cage, he said, shaking his head, "I would never dare to *hit* them! What made you think of it?"

"It's what my papa does when Mama cries too hard." He stared at her. "Oh, not to hurt," she added quickly. "But it stops the nerves, he says." Edward nodded, thinking. Sarah, the priest's wife, was certainly very nervous, everyone said so. And never in good health either. "How is your mother today?" he asked, for he knew that travel worsened her condition.

"She coughed up blood," said Thomasine, important. "It got on my dress . . . look!" And she pointed to a small spot, dry now and brown. "But Papa is mixing her infusion—the nasty black one." And she made a little face. "She hates it . . . but it makes her better."

The two children walked toward the inn, quiet for a moment. Then Thomasine, seeing a stone in the path, kicked it. It did not go far or skip satisfactorily, and she abandoned it. She smiled, showing the place where her baby tooth had come out, and flicked him lightly. "Last one to the door's a dead man!" And she began to run.

He followed, walking still, and thinking. "Dead man . . . What if her mother dies—like mine? And Brother Thomas so unhandy . . . for anything but books and prayers . . ." He had the players' scorn for all other pursuits. "She is only a baby . . ." He watched her; she looked back and beckoned. Then seeing that he would not race, she began to hop on one foot, absorbed. She was a sunny, engaging child with Brother Thomas' curly hair and round red cheeks, and nothing of her fragile, febrile mother at all.

"She is not so bad," thought Edward, remembering that she never whined and seldom cried. He went on thinking as she vanished through the inn door. "If her mother . . . Well, I shall have to take care of her!"

He nodded, pleased with himself, and hurried a little. He had forgotten how thirsty he was.

## Chapter 4

"That horrible thing!" cried Walter's wife, Jenny, covering her eyes. "Take it away!"

Walter waved it in front of her face, laughing. It flapped obscenely, flesh-colored; Nell gave a little yelp of laughter, quickly cut off.

"What is it?" Edward asked.

Walter, still teasing his wife, did not answer, but put the thing to his lips and blew. It was some kind of stitched skin or bladder, for it ballooned into a sausage shape, red and bulbous at the tip. Edward saw what it was meant to be, and blushed. Walter, having failed to make Jenny uncover her eyes, sighed and let the air out of the phallus (for such it was, an old, un-English prop). He laid it with the little pile of clothes—red jacket and close-fitting trousers, short black cloak and black cap. He had dug out the costume from the very bottom of an old trunk, for the Italian clerks had put ideas into his head.

"You think not, then? No Pantaloon?" He sounded a little sad.

Richard spoke. "Well—we have no Harlequin, now that Beau is gone. I might do my old part—and Nell is grown now, and can take the *Innamorata* . . . but what play? And how remember old dumb show?"

"Improvise, my boy!" cried Walter. "It is what the Italians do!"

He took up the Pantaloon mask, thin brown leather with a huge nose and round spectacles attached, and held it to his face, along with the white, tufted beard. Instantly he was another person: an ancient lecher, sly, pompous, and infinitely evil.

The costume, wig, and old-fashioned phallus, too, were gifts from the Italian actor-manager Drusiano Martinelli, who had brought his troupe to London eight years before. Walter had gone every day for the three-week engagement, captivated by the art of the Italian comedians. It had been easy to scrape an acquaintance with the great Pantaloon, Martinelli, for players are all alike, loving admiration. They had spent night after night together, broken English and bad

Italian spouting like twin waterfalls from their mouths, eyes alight and hands sawing the air.

In so brief a time, Walter formed a taste for the red wine of Florence and for the professional comedy of Italy, sometimes called the *Commedia dell' Arte*. Martinelli, shaking his head, said that neither traveled well, and perhaps it was so; for the wine was somewhat thin and sour, though drinkable, and Walter's Pantaloon was a far different creature from the Italian's.

Martinelli, out of his costume and mask, was a small and wiry man, sharp-faced, with bright, clever eyes and quick, speaking hands. Walter was tall and broad, with an open countenance and full, merry lips. Pantaloon, played by the Italian, was a tiny, shriveled, senile devil. When Walter tried on the character, Pantaloon became a great shambling bear of a man, old and slow, worn out by his own malice. Still, when Walter had played it afterward, it had been a favorite. The King himself had come to see it seven times!

"I am thinking," mused Richard, "how if we put Pantaloon in the *Pygmalion* play, as the sculptor that breathes life into the statue? It is a piece we have done so often . . . it needs only to be changed a bit, here and there. Nell can take the *Galatea*, and I will play Pantaloon's son. . . ."

"And the statue will come alive," cried Nell, clapping her hands, "and fall in love, not with her creator, but with the handsome young heir!"

For Pantaloon, that filthy old man, must always be undone. He must lose the girl, be jailed, pay a fine, or receive another fitting punishment. "Ah, yes!" cried Walter. "And I can have business with mallet and chisel, laying about, tripping over the marble, and so forth . . . and lascivious kisses on the marble lips, rubbing up, and so on. . . ." His full lips parted and his teeth gleamed in the candle-light.

"You are drooling already, Pantaloon!" Nell gave him a playful tap and smiled, preening herself. She liked the part—it was so easy, with nothing to do but look beautiful, go nearly naked and get whistles.

It seemed to be a good solution, all around. It was always difficult to pick a play for a small-town audience; such folk were unworldly, and understood no subtleties. This simple plot would do well, and offend no one—there was no likelihood of a sculptor living here!

"We'll keep it short—" said Richard.

"And sweet!" said Nell, giggling.

"We'll keep it short," said Richard, as if she had not spoken. The Savages were serious artists, and Nell, a distant cousin, was tolerated for her beauty only. "We'll give them tumbling and juggling, a song or two, the animals . . . What about Ursula?" he said quickly, turning to Walter. "Will you manage, or shall we let one of the apprentices put her through?"

Ursula was the dancing bear, Walter's charge. He thought a moment, then shook his head. "No—better not. She'd never go through the burning hoop for anyone else—she might jig. . . . I think we could break it up. I'll take her through the hoop, then dash around and get into Pantaloon's clothes. And Hob can jig her. She'll have to have a muzzle, though." He shrugged. "Well—it can't be helped. Too risky. Hob does well, but she might not trust him enough yet."

And they began to shape the show, there in the common room, though it was late already; the moon had risen. Little Thomasine, who had been yawning since supper, was put to bed but Edward stayed on, propping his eyelids open with his fingers when no one was looking. This was the part he liked best, the planning. He had an idea, too, but he must wait for the proper time. Perhaps they would listen, for once.

"Let's see . . . Animals first, I think," said Walter. "The dogs—Piers is good with them—and Mary for the talking bird. . . ." Piers and Mary were his son and daughter, fifteen and fourteen, but seasoned players already. "Then Mary on Beauty, bareback—she can do the handstand now—then Hob and Sammy, the new tumbling act—"

Richard broke in. "You should juggle some at that point, I think—change the mood, and get them quiet for Cleopatra. And it will give me time to dress for the play." Cleopatra was the little spotted cat; not a leopard, though thus she was billed, but a small hill creature from India, cheaper and more biddable. "Then the bear act, Hob and Walter . . . and Walter behind scenes to change. . . ." He stopped and looked at Jenny, who cringed a little. "I'm sorry—you'll have to take Jacko."

"I hate that monkey," said Jenny, miserably. "Can't Nell . . . ?"

"Nell must get into whitewash for the play," said Richard, firmly. "Your part is just apron and wimple and no paint. And Jacko is no trouble . . . and harmless. You know that."

She shuddered. "I know. But he makes me go all creepy—that awful little claw, grabbing. . . ."

"Well—cut the handshake, then."

"Papa—" said Edward, clearing his throat. "Papa—could I do it?"



Jacko likes me . . . and. . . ." He swallowed, and went on in a rush. "I have an idea. . . ."

Richard looked at him and smiled, tolerantly. The child was so solemn always. "An idea? Tell us . . . but make it quick."

"Well—I shall have to show you. Look—you know how he scratches himself, and then finds the flea?" And the boy hunched his thin shoulders and bowed his legs, letting his arms dangle long and loose. Suddenly he crouched, head between his shoulders, lip drawn down, forehead wrinkled, round eyes old and sad. He reached up behind his back, impossibly, and scratched, furiously, wearing a look of concentration. There was a silence; the scratching sounded loud. Then a look of cunning, a stillness in the little hunched body, then a sharp crack of his fingernails. He brought the hand out from behind his back, stared at the tiny cracked corpse between thumb and finger, and snapped it suddenly into his mouth and chewed. He kept the monkey look, but over the features came such an expression of beatific contentment that all the room laughed as one.

"Beautiful!" cried Walter. "Do some more, boy!"

Edward, still the monkey, stared sadly at him. Then, in one swift movement, he leaped onto the tabletop and sat there hugging himself and gibbering at them. Another big laugh. It had gone down! Edward stopped and waited, watching them, half monkey, half boy again.

"Do you see, Papa? The monkey imitates *us* . . . I imitate *him*. Would it be funny?"

"It's beautiful!" Walter said it again. "He can dress just like the monkey, do everything that Jacko does—whatever. . . . Can you do that, boy?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle Walter. I have been practicing."

And so a new act was born, as they always are, in a moment.

And though the Pantaloon was a great success, and Nell was much admired for her pretty looks and graceful movements, it was the monkey boy who won the most applause.

The audience was rustic. It was not to be expected that they could read, even the crudest, largest signs. But no announcements were necessary. Before the curtain was raised for the main event, the Pantaloon play, a tiny figure climbed the ladder to the wagon's platform stage, dressed in parti-colored hose and feathered cap, its tail curling long behind it. Another figure, in identical clothes, and not a great deal larger, but tailless, followed. As the monkey, Jacko, stepped onstage, the country audience stamped and cheered, for

these little apes were well known, even here in this forgotten village. Someone threw an apple. Jacko caught it in one long arm, turned mournful eyes to the sky, hunched down, and took a bite, sadly. There was a delighted little ripple of laughter; the other, larger figure, the boy, with an identical lugubrious face, stretched forth a begging hand; the ripple grew. The second apple was caught, the second pair of eyes was turned to heaven, the bite was taken, and the laughter swelled to an ocean of sound.

From then on, our Edward had them, as players say, in the palm of his small hand. Everything that Jacko did, Edward did, and beautifully. The good-natured rustics slapped their thighs, shouting for more. Among the laughing were some soft sighs, too, for even country wenches are sentimental. They would not let him go. Edward would have gone on till sunset, but the monkey tired and scampered off. It took two of the company, panting, to catch him. Edward's instincts did not fail him; he scampered off in the other direction, to be caught by a fat housewife, smelling of onions and ale. She clasped him to her comfortable bosom, amid laughter and tears, and gave him, after, a dozen great duck's eggs.

When the afternoon was over and Jacko went among the crowd with his little cap, the pennies rang upon each other with a nice jingle. But the child, grave-eyed, following with his cap out too, had three silver crowns and a goldpiece when it was counted.

The silver and gold came from the purses of the Italian clerks, for the village folk could not have raised such a sum among them. And it was given as much to the charming child as to the performer, but Edward did not know or care. He had tasted for the first time the sharp sweetness of laughter—his creation, and his reward. And, as with all the Savages before and after him, that sweetness would inhabit his dreams.

## *Chapter 5*

London was a meaching, niggardly place to live in now, in the Old Lady's words; the Old Lady was bedridden these days, idle and cranky. The block and axe had claimed yet another queen, the



Tudor Butcher's fifth wife, Katharine Howard. Thomas Cromwell, Keeper of the Privy Seal, had been executed, too, but his stern, oppressive influence was still felt.

Edward was fifteen. He squatted uneasily on the narrow ladder that led to the stage, waiting for his cue and watching Thomasine, quite beautiful now and long-legged in her page's gear. She had graduated to the Ganymedes, and he, Edward, did lovers and young heroes. He was Paris today, and acted the giving of the golden apple, a bore. The audiences, too, were bored with these dull court masques, and sometimes got ugly. Edward's mouth set thin, for he had seen the bulging pockets and the cracked or rotten eggs ready. The King, newly pious, had banned all comedies, and ordered masques only. The order had come from Cromwell, but it made no matter; though Cromwell had been dead now for months, the King, sad and sick and old before his time, seemed still to be under his dead advisor's thumb.

Cromwell's network of spies still webbed the city, though they were paid now out of the royal exchequer. There was even a spy in the theater, on most days, though he hardly counted as such. They knew him so well by sight, a squint-eyed little man with printer's ink on his fingers. But Londoners moved under a cloud, not knowing when the heavy hand would fall upon the shoulder, or for what. The men of the New Learning were on top, now that Queen Katharine Howard was gone, and they were stricter than ever the clergy had been. Hands were cut off for holding a crucifix, and a Latin prayer got your tongue. Harlotry was punished by a whipping through the streets, sometimes fatal; the women of the theater were easy prey for the zealots. Never had rosy limbs gone so swaddled in thick velvet, or sweet lips drooped so sadly pale. Nell wore her bright hair covered, even now as Venus, and the Juno, played by Jenny, was as muffled in heavy robes as the goddess Athene in her majesty. Young Mary, Walter's daughter, did not fare as badly, for she had the face of a saint, never mind that she was married and even now carrying her third! But even her Diana was more austere than most; her lion-skin mantle was ample enough to hide both her womanhood and her fruitfulness.

Edward watched the stage, hearing the finicking couplets, deadly sweet, duller than a grocery list. The voice of Pallas Athene rose thin and rusty from disuse. It was his grandmother, Richard's mother, retired long years ago and content to be an innwife, but pressed into service now. These masques, dreamed up by foppish courtiers for

their ladies, were always full of women's parts, more than any company could fill. She had been a competent player once, his nanny, but now she mouthed the words flatly and sawed the air, hoping to be let off. But then no one was much better, he reflected. Even those wonderful performers, Walter and Richard, just stood about like statues of Jupiter and Apollo, for one was not allowed to make anything of one's turn, no winks or flashy business, no falls, and no asides. One must ape the amateurs, the court people, who, of course, could not act at all. His cue took him by surprise; he scrambled to his feet and stepped onto the stage, only a beat late. From the corner of his eye he saw Walter's frown. He would pay a fine out of his meager take. He bowed, first to the audience, then to Athene, and spoke his first line. There was a lonely jeer, and a laugh, but nobody let fly, though he was done up like a fancy boy, by the court's orders, hair crimped and cheeks rouged with pink powder. There was something to be said for Cromwell's soldiers, after all. He had seen them file in at the back just seconds before, stolid, armed with pikes.

"Whew!" said Walter, when they had got through the piece and taken their bows. "Let the 'prentices lock up—I'm thirsty as a pilgrim!" He signed to an underling to lift the hinged platform back into its place in the side of the wagon, then led the way into the inn proper, pulling off his Jupiter beard as he went. It was their custom to gather after every performance in the Old Lady's downstairs chamber, to talk over the show and count the money. Though she was no longer able to get about, she was still head of the company.

". . . So!" exclaimed the Old Lady, eyeing the little mound of coins heaped upon the coverlet that lay over her useless legs. "That seems to be the lot . . . twenty-six shillings, and a bit over. Hardly worth keeping open for." She lay back against the pillows, her eyes closed; the counting had exhausted her, though she would not admit it.

"Now, Mother Savage," said Richard, mildly, "it will go—with a little stretch . . . and we have not counted in the cap money."

"Thomasine is late," said Edward, sluicing his painted cheeks at the big tub, and snatching the towel that hung above to scrub at them.

"Another fine," said Walter. "You have your own towel, boy . . . and why were you late? Don't tell me . . . there's no excuse. That's two farthings already this week." He wet the stub of charcoal and made a mark on the tally. "Oh, to fair Italy!" he moaned, throwing up his arms and rolling his eyes. Jenny shook her finger at him, and

covered her ears. "All right, sweeting—I'll say no more," he sighed.

Italy was Walter's dream of heaven, and had been for long years now. It looked as though he might see the true Paradise first, though, for his wife was terrified of the Narrow Sea and the tales of shipwreck. Jenny feared many things, and hated many more. She was a cross-grained, contrary sort of wench, beholden to no one, all elbows and chin, with a mouth like a trap. Edward wondered, not for the first time, how such a woman got a hold on a man like Walter, so hearty and good, while beautiful, biddable, easy-natured Nell could not keep a man a week, much less bring him to wed her.

Thomasine, like a pretty stork, stalked on her long page's legs to the bed and dumped out the contents of her oversized cap. The Old Lady ran her fingers through the coins: all small, but adding up to more than the door take. "Money!" said Thomasine. "That's all you care about, you old miser," she finished, lovingly. The Old Lady almost smiled; Thomasine could get away with anything. She stooped now and kissed the Old Lady on the cheek, a dreadful license, and stalked over to the water tub. Edward noticed she was wearing Nell's best heeled slippers—won over the chessboard, no doubt. Nell would never learn!

"What are you doing?" cried Jenny, seeing Thomasine's hands busy in the water.

"Washing out Belle Alys' dress," answered Thomasine. "Someone gave her a sweet, and she sicked up on it." Belle Alys was Jacko's successor, a small ape, very ugly and bad-tempered, but clever.

"Edward's been at the bucket, with his cheek paint," said Walter. "The dress will go pink."

"High time," said Thomasine. "The white was yellowing anyway." She held it up, pink indeed. "See—pretty!"

Belle Alys was always dressed in gauzy ruffled stuff, with a chaplet of flowers on her dark, flat skull. The exaggerated malice of the hairy ape face between these virginal trappings always drew laughter, even when Alys sulked and would not perform. This seldom happened now that Thomasine had taken over the animal acts. All beasts and most humans sensed that Thomasine, young as she was, would brook no nonsense.

Thomasine feared nothing; her way with the animals was a wonder to behold. They had a real leopard now, a big, vicious, spotted thing with yellow eyes and a huge mouthful of cruel teeth. None of the company dared go within two feet of his cage, for fear of his sudden, swift, iron claws. He would take food from Thomasine's hand,

though, as finicking as any tabby, and roll over on his back to be scratched, purring loudly.

It was she, too, who moved with the cup among the crowd, often quite as vicious. Slender, nubile, adorably pretty, she could stare down the lewdest eye. And woe to any foul-tongue who dared utter a coarse word! Smiling, dimpling, clear-eyed, she would as soon knee him in the groin as look at him. And they knew it; they had watched her box the ugly ape's ears, take a whip to the great, snarling cat, and crack the huge, angry bear across the nose with her bare hand!

Edward smiled to himself, remembering how he had resolved, years before, to take care of poor little Thomasine, should her mother die. But in the long lingering of the mother's illness it had been Thomasine who nursed her, right up to the last breath. Thomasine it was, too, who had laid out the wasted body when no midwife would touch it for fear of infection. And afterward, when Brother Thomas, heartbroken, had taken to his bed, it was his half-grown daughter who tended him, her own bright tears unshed. That had been a year back, and she had much ado with him still, mending his clothes when he tore them, and scrubbing out the food spills, and mixing his herbs and simples, too, that he sold between the acts. His eyesight was failing and he was often cup-shot as well; sometimes she had to take his youngest pupils through their Latin, on mornings when his head ached too much. Edward occasionally wondered if it was Thomasine's noble blood that had made that strong and sunny nature, for she had it—from both sides.

The Savages had learned much of Brother Thomas' history as he lay in a fever after his wife's death. The fever loosened his tongue and he talked unceasingly, a low, piteous, guilt-ridden murmuring. He had been the seventh son of a Cornish knight. The father, a petty noble, had sold off most of his holdings to buy his sons' knight-hoods. When the youngest, Thomas, was ready for his spurs, there was nothing left; even the manor house was mortgaged. So this son was given to Mother Church. He was resigned to it and did well, for a while. But he had no vocation, and his noble blood ran hot. The first maiden he encountered, he loved.

After he had taken his vows, he was sent to a little abbey in Southold, to be nuns' priest there. Sarah, its one novice, was petted and spoiled by all the child-starved holy sisters, for she was delicate from birth. Indeed, that is how they had got her in the first place, and with a dowry that was big enough to build a new steeple.

Brother Thomas, the nuns' confessor, was their teacher too; along



with her letters he taught young Sarah love. When her belly grew too large for concealment, the lovers fled, taking with them a few of the gold nobles of her dowry. Thus were they in grievous sin, fornication and thievery, but the man's sin was assuredly worse, for he belonged to God and had cheated Him. It was all long before they fell in with the Savages, but in his illness Brother Thomas cried aloud, and begged forgiveness from his Saviour. And young Thomasine, smiling, clear-eyed, continually soothed him with her firm words: "Christ's mercy extends to all, Papa." With deft fingers she mixed his medicines, mopped his burning brow, and changed his bed linen.

She was handing something to the Old Lady now, Edward saw—the leaves of foxglove pounded to a paste and mixed with wine, said to ease stiffened joints. "Drink it down, Mother Savage—and you shall have a marchpane afterward."

Edward wondered if someone had put the marchpane in the cap in lieu of a coin, or if she had bought it with her own pence. These sweets were much in evidence today, the Princess Elizabeth's birthday, some molded into Tudor roses, and others in the shape of the letter E. There would be a mock battle on the Thames tonight, too, and Greek fire lighting up the sky.

"Shall we see it?" he asked Thomasine later, when the candles were lit.

"Is it wise?" asked Brother Thomas. "There will be a great press of people—footpads and villains."

"Who do you think comes to the theater?" countered Thomasine, laughing. "Besides, Edward can carry a slapstick."

Edward laughed too, though he took one from the corner where the props were stacked, the biggest. These were long, stout clubs, used in the comedies for mock fights, and made of leather stuffed with wool. She snatched it from him and swung it around, then with both hands brought it down on his head; he rolled with the blow easily, falling in a comic sprawl.

"I saw the fake!" cried Walter, from across the room. "It was a split second too soon . . . or you were on the wrong foot, one."

"I'm out of practice," said Edward, getting up from the floor.

"So are we all," said Walter sadly, shaking his head. "It might be better to go trouping." For comedy, forbidden in London, was still permitted in the outlying hamlets.

"Still, there's no money at all in the country," said someone.

Edward took Thomasine's hand, leading her through the door.

They would be at it all evening. Every night it was the same, arguing thus and so, for truly no one was happy with things as they stood now. Thomasine took a shawl from a peg, an earth-colored thing used in old-women's parts. She wrapped it swiftly and deftly over her head and across the bosom, covering the light stuff of her frock.

"You'll stifle," Edward said, cheerfully. "It's only September."

"But no one will rob me." It was true; she looked like a poor kitchen wench, not even young. He fastened his own worn leather tunic at the neck, hiding the fine shirt collar.

The night was heavy. Fog caught in their nostrils like smoke and spread a sulphur-yellow mist around the rushlights in the street. The cobbles, too, were damp and slippery. Edward and Thomasine stumbled, holding on to each other.

All London was at the river, or headed there. No one gave them a second look. Among the press of people, some carried rushlights of their own, or small lanterns. It looked like a procession of penitents weaving slowly down to the Thames. The river itself was ablaze with torches, all with that smoky yellow light. On the largest barge, close to shore, were many fine folk, richly dressed, their faces alive in the shadow play. A small slender figure dressed in white and gold stood above them on a dais. It was the Princess Elizabeth, her hair flaming against the dark sky—the famous Tudor red, lighter than Nell's and crinkly. Edward and Thomasine elbowed through the crowd to get a better look.

It was the first time in several years Elizabeth had been shown to the people. The ten-year-old princess was in favor again for the moment, now that the Papist Queen was dead. She was still counted bastard, like her bitter half-sister, Mary Tudor, but of late there had been talk of a French marriage. She had been given new clothes, and a barge for the night, and there were to be fireworks in her honor. Her face was very white, as Edward remembered her mother's, Anne Boleyn's, but it glowed with excitement.

Thomasine nudged him and whispered hoarsely: "Look . . . there's Nell!"

He turned where she pointed. Nell stood laughing, holding out a hand to pop something into the mouth of someone next to her; they could not see his face. She ate the last of the sweetmeat and licked her fingers, still laughing. A tall figure went by, close to them, carrying a torch and they saw the face of her companion, plain as day.

Thomasine caught her breath. "It's old Squint-eye!" And indeed they had seen that face every day for weeks now.



Even now while smiling at the beautiful young woman who clung to his arm the theater spy looked crafty. Slyness and furtiveness were ingrained in him, like the printer's ink on the skin of his fingers. And all those who worked the presses were like him, Cromwell's New Learning men. They were drunk with the power of their Englished Bibles, their pamphlets that harangued, their broadsides that accused. What had begun as freedom of thought had been channeled into a narrow bigotry.

Edward shook his head, moving forward. "We ought to warn her."

"She will not thank you," said Thomasine, catching him by the hand. "She is a woman grown."

Edward hesitated, struck by her words. He shrugged; after all, it was not his business. When he looked again, the couple was nowhere to be seen, for the crowd had thickened; the Thames show was beginning.

"It was not much," said Thomasine, as they walked back afterward. "A few cannon fired, three rockets. . . . On the Prince's birthday they sank two burning ships!"

"Prince Edward is the heir, and legitimate," he answered. "Besides, he is a boy."

He saw her eyes gleam suddenly at him, like a cat's in the dark, and laughed, taking her arm. Then he noticed a thin beam of light coming from a window above. "See—" He pointed. "Nell is back before us. . . . It's good you kept me from speaking to her. Her temper. . . ." But as they looked, a shadow passed before the open window, a man. Someone pulled the shutters closed, leaving a chink of light. After a moment, that went too. The two young people did not speak as they passed in through the inn door.

There were a few customers drinking small ale. Edward noted that they did not even reach the lawful quota; one way or another, folk feared to gather in these times. They went to the back, where the kegs stood, and drew two mugs, bringing them to the counter. Edward's grandfather stood behind it, as fat now as one of his own barrels. It was his claim that he had gained an inch every year of his retirement, but Edward could not remember that he had ever looked any different. Round head covered with tight gray curls, round red cheeks, great round stomach behind a vast white apron, he looked the very picture of the jolly innkeeper. Edward almost suspected him of playing the part, for he had once been a fine player. Even now his

voice rang clear, bouncing against the walls and back, rolling through the long low room.

"Drink up, lads! Closing early tonight!" He reached out and pinched Thomasine's cheek, with a rich deep chuckle and a wink for Edward. "And how was the Princess, eh? Still the spit and image of her father?"

"Oh, no, sir!" cried Edward. "She's pretty!"

"So was old Harry once . . . and not so long ago either. A pretty man . . . face like an angel, gold and white. And a sweet singer—none finer! Used to sing his songs myself . . . fine songs." And he shook his head sadly, as if to mourn the passing of the songs and of the singer.

Thomasine stared at him, frowning a little; then she smiled and reached out to pinch his cheek in turn. "Oh, you and your music!" she said. Being tone deaf she saw nothing in it. "You and your songs! If the Devil could sing, you would name him God!" She finished her ale and set down the mug; then, leaning close, she said, "Kings should be remembered for more than two wives beheaded and a few songs no one sings any more!"

It was something close to treason she spoke, but she spoke it very low; her words did not carry beyond Edward's shoulder. Thomasine was no coward, but she was not a fool either.

## Chapter 6

For three days after the Princess Elizabeth's birthday it had rained—rained hard, pounding on the slates of the roof and collecting in deep pools in the courtyard. The theater was closed, the show wagon shut up tight against the damp; there was nothing to do and nowhere to go. The Old Lady was worse; she had swallowed a nasty potion without a murmur, a strong dose that had put her to sleep. She was sleeping still, and it was almost suppertime. The company was gathered in the common room, so as not to disturb her, and the inn door was barred against early customers. They were rehearsing a new masque.

"It would sound better, maybe, in French," said Richard ruefully, squinting at the loose leaves of paper he held.

"Or Italian," said Walter. They all laughed. It was an old joke by now, Walter's longing for the Italian lands. He laughed too, gathering up his own papers. "Well—this is the second time through and it grows no better. We have set down the moves and business. Till we have it in here," and he tapped his head. "There is no more to be done. But, Nell—in that last scene, she is weeping, you understand?"

Nell's white forehead creased. "I thought—well, Dido is a queen, isn't she?"

"She is a woman, too. And women weep—when their lovers sail away forever."

"Oh." The crease deepened. "I don't know if I can manage . . . I have to light the funeral pyre—and the candle has to be hidden until the proper line . . . and there will be my train to think about—I mustn't trip. . . ."

"Think yourself a queen, feel yourself a woman," said Walter. "Your train will take care of itself."

Several loud thumps sounded at the inn door.

"Someone is very wet," said Walter, laughing. "Poor fellow, let him in. We are finished for today at any rate. Give me a hand with these benches, someone." Edward bent to help, as Thomasine hurried to the kitchen to summon the landlord. Richard slid back the great bolt.

The heavy door flew open, catching him off balance so that he had to step back. Soldiers crowded through the opening, their boots loud on the flags of the floor, their chain mail rasping. There were a good half-dozen, picked for their size and armed with clubs. One held a rolled-up parchment, tied with a purple ribbon. He fumbled with it, breaking the seal and pretending to read, red-faced with importance.

"The King's warrant for the arrest of the whore Red Nell . . . Where is she?"

"There is no such person here," said Richard blandly; he was not a player for nothing.

From deep in the midst of the big soldiers, like a terrier among mastiffs, there pushed a little man, quivering with emotion.

"There she sits!" he cried, his arm held stiff, his finger pointing. "There is the filthy whore!" It was the spy, Nell's night companion. He was not sly now, but crackling and vicious as a whip. Nell half rose, for she recognized him. "Take the whore!" he shouted. "Put

her in chains!" Her mouth formed an O of horror, and she sank back onto her stool.

"The whore Red Nell," mouthed the stolid officer, "to be taken for harlotry, chained to a cart, and whipped through seven miles of thoroughfare . . . signed by the King's Justice." And he held out the official-looking paper. Chains whispered gratingly; the men had come prepared. It was a dreadful punishment. Edward remembered another woman he had seen whipped: a huddled bundle of bloody rags, torn red flesh, and a spread of matted long hair on the steps of St. Paul's. He heard his father's voice, cool, with a cutting edge.

"I have told you there is no such woman among us. This lady," and he turned to look at Nell, bland as before, "this lady is my wife, Mistress Elinor Savage."

The silence was like an in-drawn breath for a moment; the soldiers shuffled uncomfortably, ducking their heads. A wedded woman could not be taken for a harlot, even if she were one. They were ready to wash their hands of it.

"I tell you she is a harlot," cried the little spy, beside himself. "I was in her bed! Just here—overhead—in this inn!"

Richard's eye flicked over him before he turned away. "Then it is adultery you cry," he said smoothly, "and you are alike guilty of it . . . What is the punishment? Branding? An ear? Two ears?" He looked down at the writ he held. "Ah, yes . . . I see it is in order. Though you printed it yourself and the ink is still wet . . . Ah, well—come, then!"

The little spy snatched at the paper and seemed to shrivel, hiding in the soldiers' solid protection. There was more shuffling, a clearing of throats; puzzled looks were exchanged.

"Begging your pardon, master," said the spokesman, pulling at his short-cut hair. "A mistake . . . Yon little fellow—" And he reached for the spy, but he had disappeared, fearing vengeance, no doubt.

"A mistake, Your Honor," said the soldier, promoting Richard.

"Think no more of it, my good fellow," said Richard. He reached into a pocket and produced a coin, gold. "Here's for your trouble . . . share it with your mates."

They filed out. Richard still held the paper. He looked down at it. "Authentic," he said, "even to the seal . . . the King's." He gave a shaky sigh. "Lord Jesus, a good thing he's stingy . . . a well-paid spy would learn more of the law."

Richard had been bluffing, of course. All the spy needed to do was to print another writ, against adulterous behavior, and have it signed.



Or he could quite easily have asked for proof of the marriage. "We must have Brother Thomas draw up our marriage lines," Richard said. "He will know how. . . ."

Richard, under his cool manner, was a little astonished at himself. He had saved Nell by his quick thinking; now he found he was quite prepared to marry the girl in earnest! And why not? She was beautiful, with a good, kind nature—too generous perhaps, but they could work that out. He looked at Nell, and saw her face shining with joy. He had been alone too long. "Will you be my wife in truth, Nell?" he asked.

"Oh, Richard," she breathed, softly. "If you would . . . I'll be so good—I promise. I'll have no other man." Her face changed, suddenly, a shamed look coming over it. "That spy was never in my bed!" she cried, tearfully. "I let him kiss me a little . . . he promised to print announcements about us, our entertainments . . . pamphlets to give out, and posters. I wanted to surprise everyone. But I would never—Oh, no," she wept, "he has a wart on his nose!"

This made them all laugh, frightened as they were. Except for Richard, who had been thinking things through. "Look," he said, "I think we all know things are not as they should be here in London. Aside from this kind of peril—which can strike any of the women at any time—we have no audiences. We have no plays, really. Everything we do is suspect. Who knows where it will end? There may be more restrictions—the King may even close us down! As it is, we are the only theater that still has women players—all the others have switched to boys in petticoats and wigs. We must rehire . . . and Nell will have no future, nor will Thomasine. And Edward cannot learn his trade properly either, with comedies banned. I think we should get right away."

Walter shook his head. "All England is under the same ban. Oh, we might play in the smallest towns and get away with it. But there is no money there."

"I was thinking of Italy," said Richard. "From all reports, it is an actor's paradise."

At these words, it was as though a dam burst. There was laughter and tears, quarrels and shouting—even the apprentices got in a word or two. The Old Lady, wakened from her sleep, thumped with her cane on the floor to be let in on this noisy debate.

It rained for another night and a day, while they talked backward and forward. When the rain stopped, a decision had been reached.

Richard, Nell, Edward, Thomasine, and Brother Thomas were to



go to Italy, working their way there with the help of Belle Alys, a talking bird, three lutes, two trunks of costumes, and all of Brother Thomas' medicines.

The rest of the troupe would remain in London, keeping the inn and theater, and hiring boys to take the women's parts. It was no misfortune for Mary to give up acting. She had had so little time with her new family, she was quite looking forward to it. Jenny, whose fear of the sea was manic, lost her cross looks for once, giving silent thanks at escaping the voyage. The boy apprentices at once began to practice falsettos and mincing ways, swearing to save the company new salaries.

Walter, whose heart was broken, was determinedly cheerful, humming at his work, and Nell alternated between tears of joy for her new-found wifedom (though it was only on paper as yet) and tears of woe at leaving home. Edward, rendered numb by excitement, was good for nothing at all, but practical Thomasine taught Belle Alys three new tricks.

They bought passage on the first boat they could find, while the weather was still mild. It was a wool ship, considered the safest vessel. Indeed, like all such merchant ships, it was solidly built of the stoutest, well seasoned English oak. It was carefully calked as well, to keep its precious cargo dry, for wool was the British gold in those days. The first sight of this vessel where it rode at anchor in Southampton harbor filled them with dismay. "It is such a little boat to go so far," wailed Nell.

"Nonsense, my dear," said Richard, putting his arm around her waist. "But for the mist, one could see the shores of France. It is a small journey. And look—" He pointed—"how broad she is in the beam, like a Flemish burgher wife. Not beautiful, but solid, and comfortable."

She was broad in the beam, their little ship, to be sure; nearly as broad as she was long. She bobbed like a cork on the rippling bay water, riding high. Her name was *Lively Alice*. "It is an omen!" pronounced Thomasine, thinking of her clever little pet with the same name.

The little boat bobbed and danced all across the Channel, under capricious winds. The captain said it was a good crossing, though they crept sidewise, like a crab, through the choppy waters, taking three days.

They were all dreadfully seasick, green with it, every one. Poor Belle Alys was sickest of all, though her color did not change. They found

her, the second morning out, curled up in a little ball against a coil of rope on the slippery deck. She was dead, and stiff already, her sad simian eyes fixed forever upon the cloudless morning sky.

They were too sick to mourn Belle Alys. Not even Brother Thomas could muster up the Latin that would consign her to her animal god. Wrapped in canvas, like a miniature seaman, Belle Alys took her pink ruffles and her three new tricks to a watery grave.

They landed, finally, upon the solid shores of France. Their legs shook, and their faces were as white as peeled almonds. But, miraculously, the sickness had passed from them. They gazed back at the ship, riding now so lightly in the French harbor, and at the sea beyond. The waters stretched like gray silk, smooth and shining; impossible to believe these waters could tumble and toss so devilishly!

Thomasine looked at the sea, a long look. "Belle Alys," she said, and wept.

Edward stared at England; the air was as clear and pure as the breath of angels, and the chalk cliffs, white, stretched like a wall along the coast. They did not seem very far away—not three days, surely!

He stared, his eyes misting. "Goodbye," he said in his heart, "goodbye."

They were never to see it again, England.

## *Chapter 7*

They had not yet laid eyes on their patron, Duke Cosimo de Medici, though for nearly six months they had been performing under his franchise, just outside his duchy of Florence. His signature appeared on their license, and everything they owned—wagons, mules, scenery, costumes, and properties—were of his largesse. Indeed, they were called the Trebbio players, after his ancestral castle in the Mugello. And now, in less than a week, for the first time, they were to perform before him.

They were a little nervous, but, like all players, they concealed it well. Thomasine hummed softly and tunelessly as she turned her mare's head down the knoll of Fiesole toward the Via Bolognese, which stretched like a flung ribbon below. The rest followed single

file along the hilly path. It was August, early morning, but already hot, with that special, dry, dusty, grape-laden heat of Tuscany. Broad, neatly plowed fields extended to the east, segmented mathematically by rows of dark poplars. Behind them, terraced upon the hillside were the thick, twisted vines, heavy with fruit, that were the riches of Fiesole. To the north, still far below, the road curved to join the River Sieve. The sky, seeming closer than England's, was the cloudless blue of a Madonna's robe. Somewhere around the road's bending lay the Castle Trebbio, where they were headed.

They did not speak until they reached the Via Bolognese; it took all their concentration to manage the horses on the steep, rocky descent. Donkeys would have been easier, and perhaps safer, too, but one does not answer a duchess' summons on the broad back of a lowly donkey. There were only the four of them, for Brother Thomas had been left behind with the other members of the company. The Duchess Maria Salviati had been specific in her invitation. Perhaps she too was nervous, planning the entertainment for her son, who was now the supreme head of the Florentine state. She had not seen him since the christening of his second child, in the winter past.

"They say she dotes on him," said Thomasine, when they had reached the road. No need to ask who it was she meant. Cosimo was the Duchess' only son, and these two were on the minds of all. They fell to talking of them as they rode.

Fortune had smiled on the Savages here, shining as brilliantly as the Italian sun. They had not worked their way south from the shores of France, as planned, but, on the advice of a fellow traveler, had gone straight to the city of Florence, inquiring after that Martinelli who had once appeared in London—Walter's old friend. They had not far to look, for Drusiano Martinelli was beloved throughout northern Italy. He received them with the players' open arms, insisting that they winter in his house in Florence. Martinelli lived, if not like a noble, at least like a prosperous merchant; though crowded next to its neighbor, his house was spacious and comfortable, with tiled floors, glassed windows, and a brazier in every room. Actors, musicians, and painters came and went throughout the damp winter months, for the Martinelli hospitality knew virtually no bounds, and such folk did not mind bedding down on the floors or sleeping in shifts. Candles burned all night and conversation flowed as freely as the wine. Language was no barrier, for all had some Latin, and most a smattering of English. The emigrants learned Italian, the soft, slow

music of the Tuscan dialect that bubbles so easily into laughter, the mother tongue of the *Commedia dell' Arte*.

This was a name sometimes given to the flourishing Italian comedy, and had nothing to do with art. It might better be translated as the Comedy of the Professionals, to distinguish it from the theater of the courts and of the guilds, performed by amateurs. Indeed, thought Edward, more introspective than the others, no amateur, however talented, could encompass the sheen and brilliance of this comedy theater. He thought, youthfully, that the perfection of this craft might well take a life-time of constant study, practice, and devotion. Not that this deterred him; like the other Savages, at the first opportunity he rushed onto Italian stages like an intrepid angel.

In the winter months, the theaters of the *Commedia* remained open for business only in the larger cities. The scores of small touring companies folded tents, sealed up wagons, and went into hibernation. The climate, warmer than England's, was inclement, for it rained or misted, and sharp winds blew rawly from the north. But the municipal theaters were small and snug, like painted boxes, and attendance was brisk. Most of the established companies, like Martinelli's, took on extra players, partly from softheartedness, partly because they could afford it: winter was "the season." Often there were more players crowded backstage than there were spectators out front. These provincial performers, eager to face the city's sophisticated audiences, and ever hopeful of bettering their chances, would accept any sort of role, however small: as often as not, they sang, tumbled, and juggled outside the theater, catching patrons on the way in or out. At any of the several theaters of Rome, Milan, Venice or Genoa, a performance day was like a Fair day, the surrounding streets packed solid with humanity. Florence was no exception; there were no less than four theaters, of which Martinelli's was the largest and most modern.

This theater was a tall, narrow building which extended in depth to the next street in the rear. The façade, though perfectly flat, had simulated columns and porticoes, carved and painted with the traditional comedy figures, such as Pantalone, Arlecchino, Il Capitano, and the *Innamoratas*, masked and costumed. The colors were vivid and bold, even garish, and the drawing much exaggerated, the whole giving the effect of a wild, almost manic gaiety. It was difficult to pass through the doors without lifting the corners of one's mouth in anticipation. Inside were tiers of seats as in the ancient theaters of Rome and Greece, set in a semicircle and rising steeply to a high



ceiling. The walls also were brilliant with color and scene. Great glittering chandeliers hung overhead, and the seats were covered with rich, glowing velvet and cushioned. (Thomasine noted, however, that only the first four rows had this luxury and the steeper tiers were little more than curving wood benches.)

The stage was rather narrow and quite deep, divided into four parts. The front extended to the first seats and was known as the "forestage." All stage business between two characters, such as love scenes, plotting, and so forth, was conducted here on the forestage. Behind were three divisions of arcades, each opening on streets painted in the new perspective for which the Italian painters were justly famous. Each of these streets-in-perspective had its own rows of real wooden houses, like tiny dolls' dwellings. This gave a most marvelous effect of distance; while two actors played on the forestage, another group might be seen in the "distance" emerging from a house on a far street. While the *Innamorata* whispered love words at a front window, *Arlecchino* spied upon them from the shadow of an arcade. The visitors from England gasped with amazement and delight, seeing at once the limitless opportunities for lifelike business. Truly here was, as Walter had predicted, a player's paradise!

Painted signs were carried in before each scene change, announcing the time and place of the action; thus the street became *Pantalone's* street in Venice, a duke's castle, an inn entrance.

Behind the stage was a warren of rooms housing the painted scenery and the props, and giving the actors space to dress and wait for entrances.

Below the stage, in a kind of basement, was a long, low room known as "the Actors' Room"; rehearsals were held there, songs tried out, dance steps perfected, meals eaten, and costumes fitted; there was even a tub for laundry! The room was never empty. At any hour of the day or night, one might find it in use. The impecunious slept in a corner; leading players received patrons; lovers made tryst. It was a world within a world.

It was here, in the Actors' Room, that the four players from England first showed their wares, putting together a kind of short sketch that displayed their various talents to advantage. Except for Thomasine, who couldn't sing, they were all extremely versatile; it was obvious from the start that, with a little training and some command of the language, they would hold their own on an Italian stage, especially, as Martinelli said, in the provinces. "By spring, you will be ready," he pronounced.



Meanwhile, being a very canny showman, and knowing the value of novelty, he introduced them in his own theater, as a kind of extra "turn." Italian comedy has no intermissions. A player simply stopped the action by saying, "Look—here is a new troupe from London. Be quiet, Arlecchino, and let us watch them."

The Savages were an immediate success, for under Martinelli's direction they did English material—songs and dances which had not been seen in Florence before. Nell, her bright hair dazzling where it flowed over a dark tartan shawl, sang a ballad of the Black Douglas and his bonny Scots lassie, in a brogue you could cut with a knife; Richard, ridiculous in a cooking-pot helmet, impersonated a heavy-footed Goddam, his song all swearwords and obscenity; Edward mimed a drunken eel-seller, overturning his basket and slipping on his live wares, grotesquely funny, but somehow pitiable as well. For this performance, though, the greatest applause went to Thomasine, in a pert, appealing sketch done with a talking bird, called "The Italian Lesson." Thomasine had a small talent, but she had charm; no audience ever resisted her.

Martinelli was overjoyed. "We'll keep it in!" he cried. Indeed, they had to turn people away; all Florence wanted to see the "*bellissima Inglese*" and the rest. They became the fashion that winter. The rich merchants' wives experimented with hennas to get the Red Nell color, and courtesans spent precious hours teaching their birds to say English words. The rival theaters pirated the English songs and sang them in heavy Italian accents, in an effort to lure back the lost audiences. It was to no avail; the real thing was at Martinelli's.

They played out the season to packed houses at raised prices. Martinelli was grateful, and repaid them handsomely.

His franchise had been inherited from his father, Martinelli the Elder, another Pantalone. It had been granted by that Lorenzo called "*Il Magnifico*," whose legendary largesse had built and rebuilt most of Florence, filled streets, bridges, and palaces with such works of art as had never been seen before in one place, and brought the name of Medici to golden glory in the century just past. In his lifetime he had franchised a number of troupes, but most of the writs had lapsed during the troubles in the city. Florence had been a republic for a short time; its politics were still a tangle of civil war, blood, and lies. But the Medici were back in power again, the young Cosimo having been elected head of the state after the murder of his uncle, the Duke Alessandro. He had been only seventeen then. In

the eight years following, he had done much to weld the republicans and monarchists together, but he had little time until now for the pursuit of art. Painters, sculptors, musicians, and players had fled the city in those years; it was then that Martinelli had come to London, hoping his new theater would still be standing when he got back. It was, for it had been financed by Medici money. (The Medici had made money-lending respectable; the three balls of the pawnbroker blazed unabashedly on the family arms.)

Martinelli had fared well abroad. His debt to the Medici was paid off, unlike most others. In gratitude, they granted the actor-manager full control and disposition of all their many Commedia franchises; he was, in effect, the Grand Impresario of Florence. And that is how our English players came by the coveted territory of Fiesole, just outside the city of Florence. And how, also, they were riding just now to dinner at the ducal palace of Trebbio.

Their company of actors was small, by Florentine standards, comprising in all not more than a dozen people. They were, however, quite well equipped. Besides the great show wagon, not unlike the one used by the London Savages, they had several small living wagons, where the members of the troupe dressed, ate, and slept. They were doubly fortunate in that Fiesole possessed a Roman amphitheater. Though built in the time of Sulla it was in fairly good condition and most of its rows of stone benches were intact. Most of the performances were given there, with a weekly show in one of the neighboring towns. Their prime location gave them another advantage, for on fine evenings they got some few Florentines in front, the theaters of the city being closed in the summer months; they were even making a little money!

Richard was the director and company manager, and all the Savages were full shareholders (half-holders meant half to the Medici, the fate of the bulk of the troupe). It was harder work than they had ever done before, but no actor minds that; the weather was fine and fair, the audiences enthusiastic, and they had a roof over their heads; players do not expect much more.

The plots of the Commedia dell' Arte plays were very simple, borrowed from old Roman writers, court playwrights, or country lore. There were two or three basic themes, but the variations were endless, and the actors themselves made them. It was not true, as Edward had thought, that nothing was rehearsed and all was extempore. While there were no written lines, the improvisation was set in rehearsal and, within certain limits, underwent little or no change

from one performance to another. The player was permitted to introduce new business, even whole new speeches, within his own character's action. He was fined stiffly if he did this in a manner that affected a fellow actor and threw him off. He was fined a whole week's salary if he spoiled another's performance by distracting the audience—though this was sometimes difficult to prove, as any player knows. In effect, following a loose sort of scenario, the actors themselves wrote the plays. Most of these players had a set repertory of speeches, stage business, jokes, and the like. The most accomplished of them were walking encyclopedias, speaking both Church and classical Latin, a smattering of Greek, and all the many dialects of Italy.

The characters of the plays were set by centuries of tradition, though certain players had embellished and modified them during the years. No one knew the characters' origins, though it was said they went as far back as the ancient Roman comedy, some fifteen hundred years. Some of the more sophisticated troupes made use of as many as twenty characters, but the basic ones were these: Pantalone, or Pantaloon, the old father or old husband; Arlecchino, or Harlequin, the lazy, stupid, but sly manservant; Brighella, the scoundrel or spy; the Doctor, a ludicrous pedant; the Captain, a pompous ass; the Innamorato, or Lover; and Pedrolino or Pierrot, the young comic lover. Women's roles were confined to various Innamoratas, or sweethearts, and pert servingmaids or rustic maidens.

In the Trebbio company, Richard was the Innamorato, Nell the Innamorata; Edward, wanting Arlecchino, was cast as Pedrolino, and Thomasine played all the bucolic damsels. Taking the Pantalone was a very old actor, hound-faced, with a singularly sweet nature, who had never played in a city theater in all his years of trouping. He was no longer very agile and was much plagued with rheumatism, but he had an enormous fund of quotations; he could fill in a pause with a whole speech from Terence or Livy, having studied at the University of Padua and taken clerk's orders, long ago. He lisped a little since he had lost a number of his teeth; he lived in dread that he would soon lose them all, and his living with them. From long years behind it, he had grown to look like his mask, lugubrious and droll. The Arlecchino was poor, fit only for the country. His jokes were tired, and all his stock of stage tricks was borrowed from his betters. Audiences liked him for his acrobatics, which were excellent. He would take every opportunity to stand on his head or to roll himself into a ball, never mind that it did not suit the action. No amount of fining could break him of it, it was all he had.

To make up for the Arlecchino the Brighella was excellent. The player was of an old stage family, and was an accomplished musician and dancer as well as actor. In winter, he played small parts in the Martinelli company. The Doctor and the Captain were pedestrian but competent, and they doubled in sound effects and scene-painting. The Pantalone's wife, a lady named Margherita, took all the bawds, midwives, and witches, and Violetta, an ill-favored, clever girl, played the whores and doxies. She had a face like a pig, and was rumored to be Martinelli's bastard. Her playing was very coarse, almost lewd, and the audiences loved her. There were, besides, two clowns or buffoons, Punchinello and Pagliaccio, characters not used in the more worldly companies, but included especially for the country. The actors who played these parts were lovers, sharing the same wagon. Edward, that dreamer, was shocked, but Thomasine, born old, said, "Why not?"

Except for the lover roles, all the male characters were masked. The masks themselves were made by masters, beautifully crafted of thin, flexible leather, and portraying in brilliant caricature all the attributes belonging to the role. The Innamoratos were handsome men, well built and tall, fashionable and brave, with a goodly learning, fine voices, and many accomplishments. They wore no masks and dressed as courtiers. Often they were played by stagestruck noblemen. Their counterparts, the Innamoratas, were ladies of fashion, chosen for their beauty and grace. As with Nell, they frequently doubled as Cantarina, or singer. The pert maids went unmasked too, and dressed in embellished rustic costume. Pedrolino wore a tight-fitting white suit and a tall conical hat. He was always powdered white. The character was sweet-natured, romantic, but somewhat silly and moonstruck; he was said to have been inspired by a Bolognese miller's son who wrote poetry, hence he always wore white powder—once flour. Edward made much of this role, as you can imagine; it might have been written for him. In so short a time, he had already attracted attention in the right quarters. Scouts from other cities had sounded him out, and he had had two firm offers for the winter season. Still, Edward was not happy. His long, oval face brooded in the sun; soft chatter from the women rose around him.

To begin with, it irked him to see a part badly played, and one he himself yearned to play. He was too young and his movements too coltish for Arlecchino, but he did not know that; he brooded. And then, he was a man already, or what passed for one in that century—nearly the age Duke Cosimo had been at his election. Vague sensual



longings consumed him in the night. He woke sweating and shuddering from unremembered dreams. Nell's white bosom, pushed fashionably into swelling round hills above her gown, disturbed him, as did Thomasine's long legs. The village girls he had lain with (only two!) had not brought an answer to his unease. The rhymed love couplets of all the plays he had been hearing all his life sounded in his heart, aching, like a siren song. The air was too soft, the sky too blue, and the stars too empty. He started as Thomasine prodded him roughly.

"Wake up, you booby! We're coming to the gate!"

The Castle Trebbio was no more than a country villa, only thirty-two rooms and no gardens to speak of, but the Duchess Maria liked it. It reminded her of home. To the Savages it was a fairy palace, its plaster walls golden and rosy in the sun under its flat red-tile roof. It lay sprawling, long and low, porched and porticoed, on the crest of a little knoll. The narrow river sounded, sweet and swift, over rocks, then their horses' hooves rattled the boards of the bridge. The gate stood open. Tall old trees made a dappled tunnel overhead as they rode hesitantly up to the door, pulling at the reins, and feeling suddenly shy. No footman met them, only a stout and kindly red-cheeked country woman, bobbing in white cap and apron. Her homely look reassured them. They followed her through long, cool halls and a bewilderment of doors to the kitchen garden, a kind of vine-covered bower, where the Duchess sat.

The Duchess Maria Salviati looked like a nun. Better still, thought Thomasine, like a nursemaid. Indeed, what could be more like a nursery garden than the scene before them? At first glance, the little bower seemed to overflow with children of all sizes and shapes. Shrill, reedy voices pierced the air. Four small people in short gowns, naked of hose or slippers, rolled and bounced upon the grass, chasing a leather ball, a little white dog yapping at their heels. In a great gilded cradle slung between two trees was a pair of babies, incredibly asleep. A young girl in a green dress played a long-necked stringed instrument.

The Duchess rose from her needlework, a small tapestry in silk stretched on a square standing frame. "Oh, dear," she said, looking down at her feet, "I'm afraid I cannot move. . . ."

Two gray kittens tugged and batted at the purple wool, which had unrolled and was wrapped around her skirt. The nearest child, bright-eyed, snatched up one, a tiny clawing bundle, in an effort to help.



"Oh, no, Bia . . . he will scratch you!" cried the Duchess.

Thomasine stooped swiftly, gathering up both kittens; they hung limply over her brown arm, blinking and looking surprised. "Do they have a mother, Madonna?" she said, laughing, her tongue stumbling on the Italian. She had not known how to address the Duchess, but had not let it stop her.

The Duchess, still young, had a plain and sallow face, marked by an old pox, but when she smiled, they saw that she was kind. She gave a sign to the red-cheeked woman to take the little cats. "Which one are you, my child?" she said, in passable English. "Your names I have only on paper. . . ."

"I am Thomasine . . . Thomasina, in your tongue," said she. "But let me unwind you, Your Grace." And so saying, she knelt to the task, completing it deftly, and rolling the wool up again into its ball. The Duchess watched her, smiling, a thin flush creeping into her marked cheeks. She was no more proof against Thomasine's charm than the rest of the world.

The Duchess wore plain dove gray, simply cut, and an old-fashioned wimple with a long veil hanging behind. It was this which had given her the nunlike air. She was a pure-bred aristocrat, of an ancient lineage. The Salviati traced ancestors back to a time before Caesar's wars; they were of the old Etruscan race. Impoverished, to be sure, when Maria was young, and with far too many dowryless daughters. As the youngest and plainest of them, this Maria had been married off to an upstart Medici. She came to love him, though, grateful that he was not too old, or too ugly, and was passably kind, not flaunting his mistresses. When he was killed in a reckless skirmish, she lavished upon their only son all the fierce, proud affection of her passionate heart. "I live for my son," she had been heard to say more than once.

Now that he was Duke, and somewhat of her making, she had retired from all political intrigue and was content to play nursemaid to his children. They were to reach the number thirteen, all reared by her. Now there were only three: little Bia, whose Romany mother had run away, and his legitimate offspring by Eleonora of Toledo, both still under two years of age. The rest of the brood belonged to the wetnurse, Margherita. They lived in harmony here, along with Giulia, the bastard daughter of Cosimo's murdered uncle, Duke Alessandro. This was the maiden who still played her music softly, eyes lifted to the skies, rapt among the merry discord. Thomasine

glanced at her sharply as she handed back the wool, but the girl took no notice. Daft, thought Thomasine, or simple, perhaps.

Edward thought otherwise, and stared. The girl Giulia was exceedingly beautiful, slender and pliant as a willow, her skirts of a tender willow green spread about her, and upon her head a chaplet of little white flowers. Her hair was very long and flowing, pale as ashes, or flax, and fastened in it, here and there, as if artlessly, were more of the tiny blossoms. As he watched, she bent her lovely head to the strings she fingered and, raising it, looked him full in the eyes. It was as if he had received a blow. The heart stopped in his chest, turned over slowly, painfully, and then went on, sending the blood to shake him. Surely they could see! The eyes were only brown and large, a girl's eyes, and not deep pools at all, but he wanted to drown in them. He was, for the first time in his life, in love, and instantly.

In a daze, he heard the Duchess' precise instructions: the play chosen must be romantic, and it must be set in Spain, in compliment to Cosimo's bride of Toledo. In addition, the oldest of his children, little Bia, and his ward, Giulia, must be taught some accomplishment for the occasion—a song perhaps, or a Spanish dance. In a daze, he was presented to the beautiful Giulia, his hand trembling a little as he felt hers, narrow and cool, lie briefly in his palm. He folded his hand upon itself to keep the memory of her touch.

He had little recollection of the rest of the day—the meal eaten under the trees with the Duchess' musicians, the swift, rollicking banter, the laughter and the song, the long ride home in the gathering dusk. The place in his palm still tingled and his horse's hooves beat out Giulia's name, in rhythm with his pulse.

## *Chapter 8*

The damozel Giulia of Trebbio was not daft, as Thomasine suspected, nor was she simple, though she often appeared to be one or the other. She was not an ordinary girl.

To begin with, her life had been no ordinary one. She had been alternately spoiled and neglected from the moment of her birth. She and her twin brother, Giulio, were Duke Alessandro's only issue, but

they were bastards. Their mother had been a lady of the court poisoned by her cuckolded and righteously enraged husband. Of this, of course, the damozel had no recollection, for she had been still an infant.

The Duke had been an indulgent father, when he thought of it. The children were brought up in the magnificent court at Florence and carelessly acknowledged by their young father. The Duke was handsome, reckless, and unconventional. He cared nothing for wealth, family, or politics, spending himself indiscriminately on art, music, wine, and women. It was inevitable that he should be envied, scorned, and hated. It was inevitable, too, that he should be assassinated. He was done to death one night in his bedroom while awaiting an assignation; the woman was in the plot. The great ducal bed, canopied in priceless painted velvet, bore bloody witness to the score of stab wounds in his body.

The child of seven years, his daughter, accustomed to wander about the palace unattended in the early morning hours, discovered the body. It had been a little game of hers, when the bed-hangings were drawn about the sleeping Duke, to twitch them aside, as quietly as a mouse, and gaze at the sleeping man, hoping he might wake and notice her. Sometimes he did. Then he would laugh and hug her boisterously, calling her "my little beauty." Often he would ring the great bell for breakfast, and share it with her. If he was snoring, she would count to twenty (as far as she could manage) and then steal away, for he could be angry sometimes. And once there had been a naked woman beside him, rosy and beautiful in her tangled long hair; Giulia had been oddly frightened, and happy that the couple had not stirred.

That last morning, though, had been gray, with a laggard sun; she could make out nothing through the curtains but a paleness on the pillow. His face was very still. It was rather late; she had heard the bells in the church already. She reached out her hand boldly and touched him softly; it came away sticky.

She did not remember clearly after that. They had taken her away somewhere and given her something to drink, and she had slept. But when she thought of it, she seemed to hear wild, terrified screaming filling the air all about; it was her own, but she did not know that. And to this day she refused to sleep behind closed hangings, or even in a large bed. Often she woke, shuddering, clammy with sweat which she fancied was blood. She had never spoken of it to anyone.

She had never told anyone, either, of the last time she had seen

her brother, or of the sharp pain in her wrist where they had twisted it to wrench the two childrens' hands apart. It was only a little while after Duke Alessandro's murder, and before Cosimo had been made his successor. The two children had been brought to Trebbio by Cosimo's mother for safekeeping (or so she thought), the city being in great turmoil. They were in the private little twelfth-century chapel. It was made of stone and very dark, with no window and only two candles for light. The Duchess Maria was in the confessional with the chaplain, and the twins had been set down in a back pew beside their old nurse to wait. Giulia heard a soft thud and a gasping sound, and saw the old woman slide slowly to the stone floor. Behind her Giulia glimpsed several huge figures, black and hooded, clanking and grating beneath their shapeless robes, their eyes gleaming through the hoods' slits. And suddenly came the clamping hand upon her mouth that covered her nose and choked her, and the wrenched-apart hands, a heavy blow upon her temple, and darkness. Had she even seen Giulio's face? She thought she had, white, sharpened by fear, the mouth in an O, but she could not be sure.

Later, much later, they had learned that the abductors were in the pay of the dreaded "Hanging Cardinal," Cibo, and that the Cardinal was holding Giulio somewhere in Spain. This was the Cardinal Cibo who had done much to bring Florence to the brink of revolution, so cruel and evil his power, so insidious his influence over the late Duke. He had hoped to manipulate the Duke's only son, as pawn somehow, and was holding the boy in reserve in case the new Duke, Cosimo, fell. They were no longer sure that Giulio was alive. Cardinal Cibo had put it about that the new Duke had made more than one attempt upon the boy's life; it was possible, in so many years' passing, that he had succeeded.

The damozel's father had made no provision for her, had not even dowered her. She had nothing of her own and lived by the Duke Cosimo's charity, in the care of his mother, Duchess Maria. She felt no want; she had clothes, trinkets, books and music. She had been taught her letters, and to dance and sing; she could embroider passably well, and her manners were good.

Having no future, she had no status in the household, but the Duchess Maria, that true aristocrat, treated her as though she had. Not so Cosimo. Giulia had seen him three times: first, shortly after her father's murder, when he was heard to wonder if she might be dangerous; second, just a year ago, when he took her maidenhead, casually, on a dark and rainy night when he had no whores about



him; third, last week, when he applauded the song the young Eduardo of the comedy troupe had taught her. By now he had nearly forgotten all three occasions.

Giulia's memory was long, but it was secret. It was that which gave her that peculiarly rapt and innocent look, for she thought often, in a sort of paralysis, of certain past horrors. She was perhaps lonely; she had never had a friend her own age, girl or boy, apart from her lost twin, though several painters thought highly of her and used her for a saint's model, and two musicians had made love to her. The children of the castle were not really fond of her. She was too absent-minded. Except for the Duchess, women let their eyes sweep her in careless cruelty, though their men's eyes held admiration and lechery. She knew herself to be beautiful, and spent hours in front of her mirror. Apart from that, she felt herself to have no identity, except as an object of contempt or desire.

That is, until she met the player boy, Eduardo. Unaccountably, he was affected by her as no one ever had been. He went red, and then white, and trembled; he could not find his voice. It was as though she were someone far above him, like a princess, or someone true-born. If so, she must disabuse him, for she was too proud for deception.

She thought him, like herself, very beautiful, with his long, lean face, clean as a blade, his shining black hair (for it had darkened, as his father had known it would), and his tender mouth. He looked like a Sicilian, swift and darkly elegant, except he had not those moist black-olive eyes. His eyes were tender, like his mouth, and bright with intelligence—a warm brown, flecked with gold. He had taught her well, too, in both the song and the way of using her voice. When he was teaching, he had forgotten to tremble and flush. It was the first time she had ever been truly praised for anything. All the players stood about, as if in a trance, when she sang, and afterward the red-haired lady had tears in her eyes. "Your voice makes mine sound like a parrot's," she said, in her extravagant way.

The praise had gone to Giulia's head like wine. For the first time in her life, she had asked a favor of the Duchess—to be allowed to have more singing lessons. The Duchess, surprised at this sign of spirit in the docile, withdrawn girl, agreed. She was good-hearted and charitable, and, besides, it would not cost very much. Arrangements were made for her to ride every fine morning to the campsite of the players, for Eduardo had said the acoustics were good there, inside the old, ruined amphitheater. She was even now on her way, sitting



side-saddle, under a broad-brimmed straw hat for shade, and wearing on her lips a little secret smile. She was pleasantly warm in the sun; her blood raced, and her breath came in little, excited gasps. The Duchess had mounted her well, and given her a purse with coins and a little page for company. He was sullen, for, like all children, he did not like her, and would rather have been playing with his new hawk. For once she did not care, and kept her eyes forward, looking for the first glimpse of the bright tents of the players.

They were encamped in a little glade of cypresses, some half-dozen painted wagons gaudy against the blackish-green trees. They were not rehearsing since the evening play was an old one, familiar as the backs of their hands. Instead they were busy at little homely tasks, stirring something in a pot, hanging stockings on a line. When they saw her approach, they all came running, crowding around her horse, smiling and greeting her as if she were someone of importance; her smile deepened. Strong arms lifted her down. "Am I late?" she asked, looking into Edward's eyes.

"You are just on time," he answered. He would have said the same if twilight had been setting in.

"What a beautiful gown!" cried Nell. "A goddess of a gown!" She held up small silver tweezers. "You see—I am making my brows like yours!" Giulia looked; Nell had plucked the hairs from beneath, making a wide, doe's look. "Do you like it?"

"It is very pretty," said Giulia, "but not like me. . . ."

Nell made a little mock-sad face, and shrugged blithely. "While I am at it, shall I pluck my forehead? What do you think?"

"I think it is going out of fashion—the bald look," said Giulia gravely.

"Yes . . . I saw no high foreheads among the ladies of Trebbio," said Nell. "And Cosimo's Eleonora had a fringe of little curls . . . like so." And she pulled forward the ends of her red hair. "There! Do I look like a lady?"

"Impossible!" cried the pig-faced actress, the girl Violetta. Nell made a lunge for her, laughing, and they were gone in a whirl of gay skirts, their bare feet flashing. They were all of them barefoot, Giulia noticed, even the men, and even now, in the morning, wore rainbow colors. They had no everyday clothes, no drab workaday garments, but wore old rag-tags of bright finery that was no longer stageworthy. Their shoes, as well, they saved for their audiences. Besides, they were in the country, and why waste the good grass? Giulia noticed, as well, that these player folk were very clean, the strong hues of

their clothing faded in spots from repeated washings; even their bare feet had a bleached, pinkish look, like the feet of babies.

Thomasine appeared at Edward's shoulder. She was brown from the sun, like any peasant girl, and she wore the loose blouse, worked with crude stitched designs, that the country people hereabout made for their own wearing, but no peasant ever looked like her. Her red skirt was hitched up, for she had been practicing a dance; her legs were slim, rounded, and very long. The whole length of her was rounded, too, seeming to have no bones at all, though she was slenderly made. Her flesh looked firm and perfect, like the hard, ripe flesh of fruit. She smiled, showing small teeth, even and white, and pushing her cheeks up into little plump cushions under her eyes, which were so blue that it hurt to look at them. The effect of Thomasine was dazzling altogether, especially up close; Giulia thought she did not look like a human girl at all, but something that had been made, just to be looked at. "Will you take some refreshment, Lady?" she asked. "I have some white wine sweetened with honey . . . it has been cooling all night in the spring."

Thomasine, too, had been in the spring, or somewhere, bathing, for her lashes were spiky and the ends of her brown hair were damp and curling. Edward's hair, too, showed the rake of the comb through its wetness. Together? Have they bathed together? The thought gave Giulia a small pang of dismay; she pushed it aside and followed after Thomasine.

The wagon had a square awning, painted in stripes, attached to its side, and under its shade there were a table and some stools, and a small fire over which a cooking-pot was hanging. Thomasine lifted the lid and sniffed. "Rabbit stew," she said, wrinkling her nose in distaste. "Father likes it." Thomasine did not eat the flesh of animals; she had worked with too many of them. She ran to the door of the wagon and, without mounting the steps, looked in. "Oh, Father is gone already. He must be with his pots, as usual," she added, mysteriously. "You have not yet met Father." It was not a question, and needed no answer, but Giulia shook her head, though she was not altogether sure whom she had met, it was all so bewildering. "Would you like to see inside?" asked Thomasine. Giulia nodded.

The little wagon was very neat and everything in it was new, though tiny. There were two narrow box beds, covered with bright cloth which had been cut and sewn to fit; two windows, with little shutters; two small trunks; and a woven rug upon the tiny floor. Clothes hung on pegs; there were a bowl with apples and an oddly

shaped vase with field flowers. They were of some reddish clay, but shiny, and there were black dancing figures running right around them; the bowl had a great crack in it. Seeing Giulia looking at them, Thomasine said, "They are very old. Father found them in the ground."

Giulia was startled. Thomasine laughed. "The earth here is very rich with treasures, didn't you know? Father cannot get enough of them. He is forever digging. Caesar's legions passed this way, you know, long ago, and camped, and left things behind—and gradually they got buried over, after centuries."

Giulia said, "Caesar conquered England once, too."

"Ah, but Father never thought of that. Nothing at home ever seems so exciting, does it?"

Giulia, of course, could not answer, for she had never been anywhere but here.

The sweet wine was delicious, cool and fresh. There was a whole jug of it, and all the players stopped what they were doing to share it, and to sample the little cakes Thomasine had baked that morning.

Giulia had never been among such folk before. Their loud, bright voices, their wide gestures, their easy laughter confused her and made her shy. They were like a flock of exotic birds and she could barely tell them apart. They were shameless show-offs, too, even now when they were relaxing, each jostling each, good-humoredly, for her attention. One sad-faced man with thinning hair stood right on his head. Children, she thought, they behave like children. But no, children were quite solemn at their play, and these were merry, as though they were celebrating a saint's day. They teased her, gently. "How many tiring-women did it take to accomplish this hair-do?" and touched the little braids that hung about her ears, the latest fashion.

"I have no women," she said, gravely. And it was quite true; she had no maid at all, not even a village girl. She did not mind, really, for she had little to fill her days. This visit, for instance, was the first outing of her life. She was in a daze of happiness, almost literally stunned by it, but no one could have read it in her face; she had schooled it for such long years. She thought that she could sit here forever, among these people, drinking in the sights and sounds: she enjoyed it more than the play, which earlier she had failed to understand. When Edward led her away, she could have wept.

"Where is the boy?" he asked, looking about. But he was happy too, the little page; the pig-faced girl was teaching him to juggle three silver balls; he never looked Giulia's way.

"That's all right, then," said Edward. "They will keep him amused."

She turned wide eyes upon him; she was not accustomed to think of others.

It was only a small amphitheater, as such old ruins go, but it made a vast enclosed space. The great show wagon which stood inside it, its sides still closed up, looked like a toy. Lichen and ivies covered the stones of the place, and the stones themselves had fallen away in spots, for even the magnificent Lorenzo had not seen fit to keep it in repair. But it was an impressive sight for all that, the tiers and tiers of marble, centuries-smooth, rising to the sky. Someone had left a yellow cushion halfway up, a little shock of color against the gray, and there were a few empty bottles fallen upon their sides, and one or two blown parchment wrappings, remnants of the last audience.

"It must be cleaned up before the show," said Edward, frowning. "Thomazine usually does it. . . ."

"Thomazine is very beautiful," said Giulia, suddenly.

He stared at her. It was as if she had called beautiful the old slapstick he still carried for luck, that he had known all his days.

"The audiences love her," he said. "That's the important thing."

They began the lesson. Edward had brought a flute, saying it was a perfect accompaniment for her voice. He did not teach her a song this time, but strange little trills and exercises. After a very short time her throat began to ache, for she had never used those muscles. She put her hand to it.

"Stop for a little," he said, tapping out the flute against his hand. "We mustn't put a strain upon you." He shook his head, admiring. "You are a natural singer," he said. He did not tremble now, nor was he tongue-tied, but all business; he had all but forgotten the girl, encountering the pupil. "Come, we'll take a break and find Brother Thomas."

There were chambers in the rock, under the seat tiers, appearing at intervals along the backs. He opened one door. The chamber was crammed to the ceiling with blocks of marble; she could see that one or two had the marks of the sculptor's chisel, and, as in a Titan's dream, rough shapes seemed ready to define themselves.

"This is a store room," said Edward. "They say the marbles were left here by Buonarroti, who carved the great figure of David in the city . . . Michelangelo Buonarroti."

He was the famous sculptor of Florence, very old now, and working on a project for the Pope at Rome. Giulia had heard the name,



of course, for he was the Florentines' greatest pride, after Leonardo, but she had never seen any of his statues, not even the David. She touched the stone timidly. There was a whitish dust on it, like powder, for the chisel cuts had never been polished.

"How do you know of our artists?" she said, wonderingly. "You are English."

"Oh, actors know everything," he said, smiling. "Come."

He led her into the next chamber, where a lamp burned, casting shadows. "Thomasine's father," he said. "Our Brother Thomas. And this is Madonna Giulia, the lady of Trebbio."

She saw a clever face under a freshly shaven tonsure, a loose brown robe gathered with a cord, bare feet. He had been kneeling among some broken bits of clay. Here and there amid the rubble gleamed a flash of gold, catching the lamplight. He rose and took her hand, his own was warm and hard. He sketched a cross-sign in the air between them. Could this really be Thomasine's father? A monk? But of course it was—the likeness was there in his face, plain to see. And was it so very strange, after all? she thought. Did not the old Pope Alexander, dead now, own to a son and daughter, the infamous Borgias? And did he not love them dearly . . . the girl, it was still whispered, too well?

She found her voice, after a too long moment, but stupidly. "Is this where you dig? Thomasine said . . ." She trailed off.

"No, not here," he said kindly, showing no surprise. "This is my workroom . . . and perhaps will be a shop someday." He shrugged, smiling. "No, the terrain all about here is teeming with antiquities. One has only to scratch the surface. Of course, others before me have taken all the ancient art. What is left are the homely bits . . . pots, bowls, a buckle or two. This morning, look, I found this!" He held up a bit of baked brown clay, shaped like a bird, but with the beak broken off. "It is a lamp, do you see? Here, in this hollow, was where the oil went. An everyday object, but what artistry! They knew how to live, the ancients. They must have grace about them always." He was warming to his subject, his Thomasine cheeks growing pinker. "I think, you see, that it belonged to some lowly member of the audience—a Gaul, of course, it would have been then, but Romanized. I think it was carried here to help them find their way out in the dark. The old plays, you know, went on all day, until way after sundown."

"Hard work for the actors," said Edward, laughing.

"Oh, custom, my boy, custom!" He waved his forefinger at Ed-



ward. "One can do what one is trained to. Besides, I doubt not that there was more than one play, each with its own set of players." He stopped, smiling at his own eagerness. "I am long-winded, getting old. . . . My child, would you like to see those I have sorted and cemented together? But you must not touch—they must have time to dry well. . . ."

He made a gesture, raising the lamp to make the light go farther. Ranged against the wall, each with a number and some Latin script, were dozens upon dozens of pottery pieces, of every shape and size. Some, it was true, did have a kind of rude grace, but Giulia, accustomed to the intricately made artifacts of the great masters of the Florentine Renaissance, often made of precious metals, and brand-new as well, could see little beauty in the collection. Edward, more sensitive to history, shook his head wonderingly. "To think that so long ago folk used such things . . . so like our own!"

They thanked Brother Thomas then, and went out into the sunlight. "Have you rested enough?" asked Edward. "Shall we go back to our work?"

"I'd like to," said Giulia, shyly.

"You could be a great singer, I think, with work . . . even a professional."

"Oh, do you think so?" she breathed, overwhelmed by the thought.

"I do, truly," he said, gravely, looking at her. "And then, you are so wonderful to look at . . . audiences would love you." He did not add, "as I do," but she read it in his eyes, her heartbeat quickening.

The voice lessons were sweet, and the mute contact of eyes even sweeter; the chance brush of hand on hand was a splintering delight.

The girl longed to be loved, and the boy ached to love her. It was high summer, and the dark nights were warm and soft; by the end of the week, they were lovers and there were no secrets between them.

## *Chapter 9*

By the time that Giulia knew herself to be with child (and it had not taken long, only till the summer's end), she felt that she had

never known another home but the little cluster of tents and wagons in the glade. It was true that she still lived at the castle, but each night, the Duchess retiring early, Giulia slipped out through the gates to meet her Eduardo. By day, she might have been another member of the troupe, her long white feet bare in the grass, freckles on her nose, and her voice trilling free and high as a lark's.

She knew all the plays now, and had even learned when to laugh. At first the speed and buffoonery had completely bewildered her. She watched every player, as rapt as she had once been in her daydreams. She was suddenly stage-struck. When Richard let her sing a song, dressed in one of Nell's goddess gowns, during a scene change, she was wonderfully happy and not really nervous. She did well, too, and pleased the audience, though she had not mastered movement or gesture, and simply sang, standing still and with her arms at her sides.

"It will do," said Richard, afterward. "She looks like a lady. It is better this way."

Giulia was graceful, but she was not clever and had little sense of rhythm. Her voice, however, was most unusual, very high and pure, like the voice of a half-grown boy, and within its range it was extremely supple, an acrobatic voice. In later times, such voices were to be called *coloraturas*. It challenged the musicians of the company, who longed to train it this way and that, but they had no knowledge of how to go about it. Richard wrote some special music for her, showy and brilliant, and she learned to control her breathing. "She could be a success in 'the season,'" was the pronouncement. Giulia, daughter of a Medici, warmed by love and dazzled by praise, waited on them all like a little scullery maid. She had found her identity.

It was Thomasine, wise beyond her experience, who discovered the state of things with Giulia, for the girl herself was as innocent as a dormouse. She adored Thomasine, following her about like one of the little trained dogs. Thomasine merely endured her, for she had retained her harsh first impressions to some degree; she found the girl exasperating, dull and fey all at once. Giulia, one morning, was "helping" her tidy up her sleeping-wagon—"getting in the way," as Thomasine put it. Suddenly Giulia put her hand to her middle, bent over, and vomited, her face green. Thomasine held her head, made her lie down, and cleaned up the mess.

"When are your monthly courses due?" asked Thomasine, when it was over and Giulia was quiet.

"They should have come two weeks ago," said Giulia. "Perhaps it is that which is making me sick?"

"You may be sure of it, my girl," said Thomasine. "You are with child."

Giulia's face broke into a wide, tremulous smile. "How wonderful," she murmured, with dreaming eyes.

"Daft," thought Thomasine, "the girl is daft." "Do you know who the father is?" she asked.

"Of course," said Giulia. "It is Eduardo."

Thomasine, too clever by half, had not seen what was as plain as the nose on her face. She felt as though she had been hit by all the stones of the amphitheater. It had never occurred to her that Edward was not her property. When the force of the blow had receded, red hatred rose through her, flooding her being to her very eyes. She let it wash over her in waves, willing herself not to kill the girl on the spot. When the red waves were still, she put the feeling away, tidily, never to suffer it again. From then on, she managed the whole thing. It was Thomasine who crushed the leaves of mint and steeped them for a soothing potion, Thomasine who spoke to Richard, head of the company, Thomasine who took Edward to task. It was Thomasine as well who took the whole problem to the Duchess.

The Duchess, sensing a kindred spirit in the young actress, listened quietly, her hands folded in her lap, her mind darting swiftly as Thomasine spoke. The girl Giulia had never had a future; even a convent will not take a dowryless novice. A squire was the highest she might ever look to, if that. She was an expense, an appendage, not even very useful, for she did nothing well. The Duchess' charity was boundless, but dependent on her son, for he owned everything—lands, castles, servants, musicians, even the troupe. Who could know when, in a frugal fit, he might refuse to keep the girl? It was a man's world.

"I must speak to Cosimo," she said. "I must speak to my son, the Duke."

". . . and they will take the girl, for they call her talented and an asset. The young man will marry her . . . he admits he is the father. . . ."

"Certainly I am not," thought Cosimo, counting the months, and feeling relieved. The girl might have proved an awkwardness, had she owned more spirit. Cosimo had come to love his bride, Eleonora. He planned to turn over a new leaf. He cleared his throat.

"It might be a solution," he said cautiously. "Yes . . . it is acceptable. I will even give a bride gift. Remind me."

"Thank you, my son," said the Duchess, kissing his hand. "You are very generous."

The Duke scowled; he still did not feel comfortable. He fidgeted a little, pleating the skirts of his ducal robe between his long white fingers, so like his mother's. He lifted his eyes, baggy already at twenty-five, and looked the Duchess square in the face.

"Yes," he said, heavily. "The girl was a nuisance . . . a born whore. . . ."

It was unfair, but he was a man in Florence in 1544, and he was the Duke.

## *Chapter 10*

The little troupe that Giulia found herself in was by no means the merry, open-hearted, easy brotherhood that she believed it to be. The layer of blithe good will which they wore between themselves and the world had begun, like all armor, to chafe.

They had been together, sleeping and waking, working and playing, for close on to eight months now. As the weather grew less obliging, the leaves beginning to wither upon the trees and the flowers to lose their first luster, more than one of the players found himself looking forward to the closing day, which would come with the first rains of autumn. True, they would be out of work, perhaps till spring—but who knew?—it might be otherwise. This winter might bring fame and fortune—or at least a small part in one of the big Florentine theaters.

Except for the Savages, still feeling their way in an unfamiliar style, none of the actors of this Trebbio company were top-quality merchandise. They were all, like the new English, extremely lucky to be working at all, let alone here, so close to the city, and for such a long season. But they did not think of that; the first flush of joy had worn off. Behind their masks, they pulled long faces at one another, while, off the stage, tempers flared, small but hot. In their bed, the old Pantalone and his wife lamented Arlecchino's outrageous antics,



while pig-faced Violetta sulked that her best role had been given to Thomasine, and the Pagliaccio no longer spoke to his erstwhile lover, Punchinello.

Audiences fell off with the cooler weather, for the stone benches struck chill. Performances suffered, and rules were broken onstage every night. At the end of the week, the fines had mounted into quite a tidy sum. "I shall get rich on them!" Richard, who collected them, was wry. He had troubles of his own, poor man, for his Nell was far from constant. All in all, the first swift patter of rain on the roofs was welcome. Time to pack up, time to move on. Spirits rose.

The Savages, feeling rich in their combined earnings, took a house in Florence for the short months of winter. It was small, narrow, and dark, huddled against its neighbor, and Thomasine said the rent was a scandal, but no matter, the house was in the thick of things, just one street away from the Street of the Comedies. True, in the other direction lay the odorous Street of the Dyers, but the smell was not nearly so bad as one might imagine, especially if the wind was right. And if they were crowded, they had but to remember the wagons that had been their home for so long.

Thomasine had been remembered from the past season, and Martinelli made a place for her in second-maid roles. Edward took the best of his offers, the Pedrolino at Bruneschi's, Florence's second-best theater. The others were not so fortunate. Nell was reduced to singing in a wine shop, where, alas, she distributed her favors along with her songs. Richard, in many ways the most accomplished, was out of work till well after Christ's Mass. There was at this time a plethora of *Innamoratos*, for the comedy was all the rage among the handsomer young nobles. When he did finally get an assignment, it was in *Il Capitano* roles, parts which did not appear in all of the plays. He was happy with them, though, saying it added new dimension to his art, and that he was getting too old for lovers anyway. Now he could stop dyeing his hair!

Brother Thomas, who had carted all his antique treasures with him to the city, was not happy at all, though he was making more money than all the others combined. There had always been a lively market in Florence for the herbs and simples that he peddled. Even with Thomasine's help, and with the inept Giulia pressed into service for the brewing, his supply could never meet the demand. But what broke his heart was that his homely artifacts, tentatively put upon the market, were selling like hot cakes too; every Florentine thought himself a collector, it was the spirit of the age. He began to



weep and sulk and, finally, to hoard. When practical Thomasine rooted out the last clay whistle, which brought a whole gold florin, he was inconsolable. "There are plenty more," scolded Thomasine. "You can begin all over in the spring!" But no, he took to the wine jug again. Thus began what Thomasine was to call the "winter disease." He became a familiar sight on the streets of Florence—a small monk in a stained habit with doleful eyes, swaying behind his cartful of medicines.

This winter, too, began what later became the famous rivalry between the first and second theaters. Edward, ecstatically happy and still wildly in love, brimmed over with creative energy. His Pedrolino became the talk of the city—it shimmered, it glowed, it filled the stage. He brought new elements into the part, tenderness, pride, poesy, and pathos. Audiences laughed through a mist of tears. The role began to be known as "Neddolino" or "Neddo," and the name stuck. Centuries later there were to be "Neddos," tall, slender, languishing young men lifting huge dark eyes to the cold moon, stumbling sadly to the music of a broken lute. Audiences flocked like sheep, deserting the favorite, Martinelli. Edward's salary doubled.

A pall hung over the half-filled theater at Martinelli's. Downstairs in the Actors' Room, voices were hushed, and rehearsal music was played softly, as though a body were laid out on the long table. Thomasine, in a corner, practiced a new dance with the Arlecchino. They were all trying out new things these days, desperate as they were. Thomasine, already taller than most Italian men, was still growing. She had all she could do to keep her stage clothes lengthened. The rehearsal skirt she wore was old, and very short; when she twirled in the dance, the whole long, dazzling length of her legs showed in a breathtaking flash. Martinelli, gloomy in a doorway, stared, rubbing his chin in thought. Richard, who was "on" that week as *Il Capitano*, rolled his eyes to heaven, saying, "What legs! Even two years back, I recall, she made a wonderful page!"

Martinelli turned, his mobile face thunderstruck; he snapped his fingers. "Where is it . . . ? That scenario—did you ever see it? The one where the girl is shipwrecked and disguises herself as a boy to travel in a strange country . . . We never played it, never had the right actress."

And that was how it happened. Fifty years later, the famous legs of Thomasina Bella were still twinkling on the stages of Italy, and boy-girl parts were to flourish *ad nauseam* in the theaters of the world.

## Chapter 11

The Old Lady died in London. She had lived to a great age, though it was years now since she had admitted to it. She was buried in the Savages' plot, just outside the city walls, next to Beau and the others before him. A headstone was raised above her grave, with her name, Isabelle Savage, carved in bold letters upon it. The pretty name, all but forgotten now, conjured up visions of the long-gone sprightly dancer, black eyes snapping forever on some ghostly stage.

Her death was mourned, even here, far away in Italy. It was as though an era had passed. The players had a mass sung for her, for they were rich enough now, and Thomasine wept nearly as hard as she had for Belle Alys. Walter's letter named the date of the Old Lady's passing, almost a month past, and Brother Thomas wrote it down, bordered in black, so that it should be remembered in years to come.

Walter wrote other news, too: how the King had taken yet another wife, Katharine Parr, who was more nurse than wife, for the King was ailing, and lame now from his ulcerous leg. How the heir, little Edward, was a sickly boy, and Mary, next in line, suffered from debilitating headaches. "But the Princess Elizabeth thrives and is hearty," he wrote. "I am for her! She is a hearty playgoer, too, and sent me a purse of goldpieces after my last performance." He wrote that women were banned from the stage now by law and boys in wigs and padding played all the heroines. "It is not so bad, though," he went on. "We prosper well, and even play comedy. They have banned lewd words, too, but we play in dumb show. I have revived the Pantaloon plays and the people love them, calling our miming 'Pantomime.' I have grown very stout and am nicknamed, for the Pantaloon part, 'Fat Pants.' It is an affectionate name, though, and I would not wish it otherwise. I am content, and at last do not long for the Italian sun."

They were all happy for Walter, even Giulia, who did not know him. "So the Savages will go on still—in London as well as here!" she cried, clapping her hands. "But I do not like the nickname . . . it is vulgar!"

Giulia was a respected member of the company now, and sang to great acclaim at every performance, though she was very close to her time. She had grown thinner, except for the bulge of her stomach; her cheeks and eyes were hollowed and her arms were like sticks. Edward begged her to rest, but she would not. "I love to sing," she said. "It is the only thing I can do well . . ."

After one performance, in the early spring, she came offstage after her last song, her hand pressed to her side, her lips white. Her pains had begun. "Why did you perform today? Why, when you must have known!" Edward was distracted with fear for her.

"Sh-h-h," said Richard, bending over her. "She is a true player . . . a Savage."

"Thank you, dear father-in-law." She smiled weakly. "I wanted to belong. . . ."

The labor was hard and long. Giulia died on the third day, leaving a daughter, beautiful as an angel, whom they called Giulietta. They had removed Giulia to Trebbio, to the Duchess' best bedchamber, and summoned two Florentine physicians. But the doctors could not save her, even with mandrake root and a sharp sword under the mattress. Her face was like clay, but her eyes shone brighter than the great wax candles that burned above her. "I am happy . . . so happy," she whispered, holding Edward's hand. Through the Duchess' charity, she was laid to rest among the Medici, in the little graveyard next to the private chapel; for several centuries, she was the only Savage to be buried in consecrated ground.

Edward took the death hard. He spoke little, and laughed not at all. It seemed that all his high, bright spirits had lain down in the grave with his beloved. His work did not suffer, though; as often happens with artists, his art was nourished by his grief. His stage selves grew ever finer, each facet shining like the edge of a cut gem. In a few short months, the name of Savage became famous throughout Italy, though the Italians called it Saviggi. Folk journeyed for many miles to see the new "Neddo" at the Theater Bruneschi. It became known, as well, that there were other Saviggis, in the theater down the street: Richard, called Riccardo, and the dazzling Thomasina. Nell was hired back, in good parts, for Martinelli knew when to seize an opportunity. Both theaters flourished, playing to full houses and even turning customers away.

As for Thomasine, though no one named her a great actress, it was easily apparent that all Florence was at her feet. She was deluged with gifts—flowers, lengths of precious silk, jeweled baubles, and

purses filled with little gold coins. Every night the long line of her admirers strung itself out and down the stairs to the Actors' Room, bowing and smiling, getting in everyone's way. There were even three young aristocrats who had hired out to Martinelli as apprentices, paying for the privilege of being near her. She was charming to them all, and favored none. She was completely chaste, and maddeningly so. When a lovelorn poet wrote a sonnet to her eyebrows or her ankles, she smiled at him sweetly and read it aloud in her clear, delightfully English voice. When a young student slashed his wrists for love of her, she scolded him gently, tended his wounds, and nursed him back to health. This episode, indeed, so piqued the fashionable fancy that youthful gallants went about for the whole season with wrists bandaged in white silk, "*à la Thomasina*." As for the ladies of the great houses and the lighter ladies of the streets they imitated the player dress, wearing loose tresses curled beneath a page's cap, and page's hose, too, of thin silk, to show off pretty legs. It was a scandal, and some of the sincerer Church Fathers preached against it, to no avail. It was an age that doted on the arts; none more so than the art of the comedy.

The little girl, Giulietta, grew more beautiful daily; clever she was, too, dancing before she walked and singing before she could form the words. When she did speak her first word, it was "Nellee," for Nell had completely lost her heart to this tiny scrap of humanity, coming home early nights and disdaining her admirers. She was insanely jealous of the wetnurse, snatching the child from her after each feeding. When Giulietta was weaned, Nell prepared all her baby soups and porridges, chopping and straining the food with her own white hands, that had never before boiled water! "I have a true housewife now," teased Richard, and Nell tossed her bright head and dimpled at the praise.

By the time the child had lisped her first sentence onstage as the smallest of angels, Edward had married once again. It was a stunning shock; they had for so long accustomed themselves to the sight of him, wraithlike in the halls of the house the Saviggis shared. It had not even been suspected. Nell went red, then white, for she feared the loss of her little love, Giulietta. With Thomasine, though her smooth, creamy skin did not change color, it was as though the ground she stood on had dropped out from under her not once but twice. She laughed a great deal, and put herself out to be sisterly to the bride. It was not easy, for the bride was just such a one as the damozel Giulia had been, a fragile blonde with a thunderstruck look.



She was the daughter of the actor-manager Bruneschi, Edward's employer, and took all the *Innamorata* roles at the theater there, though she was still very young. Her name was Raimunda. It did not take Thomasine long to discern that both the hair on Raimunda's head and the look on her face were counterfeit. The gold gleamed brassily in the candlelight, and a dark line showed sometimes at the parting. Behind the tremulous parted lips lurked a silky serpent's tongue, and the soft eyes could bore holes in wood. She had been "born in a trunk," though the saying was still fresh in those days; small wonder that she knew her business! She was quick, loud, and dependable, if a trifle common, which was all to the good, for she was already a great favorite among the cheaper seats, and God knows there were a lot of them! She was not popular with her fellow players, for she disdained none of the uglier tricks. There were whispers, too, about her virtue, or lack of it, but they were whispers only. She was "management," after all!

Richard was unfailingly gallant to his new daughter-in-law. If he thought her not a patch on the first, he did not show it. Nell, once it was seen that Giulietta would not be taken from her, hardly noticed the girl. Brother Thomas, sobered up for the event, said the Latin words and blessed the couple at the wedding, though afterward, as often as not, he called her by the first wife's name.

The new bride and groom came to live at the Saviggi house, crowding it. Perhaps it was the extra work, which fell to Thomasine, or the extra burden of pain that prompted her actions then. She complained of neither; it was not her way. But, as it seemed, almost in a moment, she decided between her suitors, choosing the handsomest and richest among them.

This was a young man of the Ricci family, wealthy bankers who could trace their origins back to the tenth century. His name was Benvenuto and he came from the nearby Pisan branch of the Ricci. They were as nearly noble as one can get without being titled. They had a history of liberal thinking, which had rather got in their way all along. The young man was striking to look at, having that coloring sometimes seen in northern Italy, fair skin, bright brown eyes, and hair the color of an autumn leaf just before it falls. He had spent a year or two at the university at Padua, a few more in the studio of the painting master Bronzini, and was now happily painting scenery and sketching from life at the Theater Martinelli. He was what would one day be termed a dilettante. His drawings were charming, however, and were beginning to enjoy a vogue, along with



the comedy theater they depicted. On the day Thomasine accepted him, he was busily engaged in sketching her. He had taken to following her about and catching her, completely unaware, in all her pretty actions.

Thomasine did not think this particular action pretty. She was sweeping out the bedchamber used by Edward and his bride, whose heads were presumably too much in the clouds to see the dust under their feet. Like many competent housewives, Thomasine hated housework. Her brow knitted, her cheeks flushed, she cursed the broom and called the duster bad names. She was altogether so delightful to watch that Benvenuto, who in his own small way was an artist too, must get it down on paper. He worked quickly, his charcoal fairly flying over the paper. He finished just as Thomasine swept up the last of the dirt and emptied it into the bin, swearing softly. She flung the tired broom into the closet and slammed the door on it, looking triumphant. "There, you filthy villain, go ahead and break in two!"

Benvenuto looked up from his paper, delighted. She looked so adorable, with a faint little mustache of sweat and the curls coming loose from her dust cap, and he had caught it to the life.

"You need not do it, you know," he said, smiling. "Where is the housemaid that I sent you from my mother's household?"

"Oh, there is too much . . . she cannot do it all. Besides, she is getting old—there are too many stairs. . . ."

"You are soft-hearted. It is her job." He kept his head down purposely, not looking at her, and said, lightly, tentatively, as he had said every day for nearly a year, "If you would marry me, you could have a house of your own. . . ."

"I will," she said, in a small voice, sounding surprised. "I will, of course I will. Why should I not?" And then, a moment later, more loudly, "There is no one to stop me!" It had almost a ring of defiance.

The charcoal broke under his hand. He stood up, his face naked and shining. Strangely moved, she melted into his arms. They kissed, hard and long; neither of them knew whose tears wet their close-pressed faces.

After a time she pulled away, laughing a little, shaky laugh. Her head tilted back to look at him, her eyes raised to his. "And you are tall . . . as well," she said, wonderingly.

## Chapter 12

Fiesole was still a small corner of Eden in the spring, as it had been that first spring, a decade ago. The sun already held a hint of its scorching summer breath, when the winds were still. Wild flowers, colored like Moorish mosaics, spread a carpet upon the hills and blew, taller, in the meadows. The new grass was a pale green stubble untouched by the little Tuscan goats. Thomasine, as she sat in the doorway of her new living-wagon, turned her face up to the sun, sighing. Perhaps she ought to worry about freckles and spotting, now that she was old, nearly twenty-three. But her spirit shrugged, lapped, as it were, by warmth, and lulled by the little country noises. She opened the top buttons of her bodice, sighed again, and closed her eyes.

Far away, in the low bushes, a cuckoo called, sadly; tears stung behind her eyelids. What it is to be a woman, she thought. To be a woman, and wake one day from a dream to find oneself mother of two great boys and widowed, now, in an alien war! For Benvenuto, so sweet, so dear, so briefly touched, lay for a year now in Spanish soil, his bones shattered by Spanish cannon, while below, down the hill, her little red-haired sons tumbled like puppies, and shouted reedily in Italian. She had given them English names, Tom and the baby Benjy, but in all else they were true children of this Tuscan soil, quick and lively, with bright, beckoning eyes.

Tom's namesake, too, was dead. Her father, Brother Thomas, the beloved little monk of the Street of the Comedies. He had lain outside all of one stormy night while they hunted him in every tavern. In the morning they found him in a back street, a little bundle of old clothes, lifeless. Full of wine he had been, and an empty jug beside him, but it had not kept him warm. There were many to weep for, truly, on a sad bird note while the sun shone sweet: husband, father, and Edward's first bride, hardly even a woman. But it was not Thomasine's way, for these sadnesses were all over now, and not to be dwelt on. Besides, there was much to the good to be counted.

There were Thomasine's two boys, babies yet but very forward for their ages, healthy and beautiful. Edward's daughter, Giulietta, six

years old, thrived, and showed signs of a most remarkable talent. It could not be hidden, and already parts were being written in for the little mite. And truly, in this golden age, they all prospered. No need, these days, for the wearing of old clothes, even in rehearsal. Like the gentry, they gave them away to the poor. Edward had played a season in Venice, and another in Rome. His name was a household word. It was rumored that, if he wished, he could buy out his father-in-law, Bruneschi. One avoided the subject for various reasons, of course. In fact, one must tread carefully in all things with Edward these days. His ill-humors passed for genius, but the Savages knew better.

Just this morning, for instance, there had been an ugly scene, in rehearsal. God knew Nell had grown indolent, and fat as well, but was that any reason to shame her before the whole company, most of them new? Thomasine's loyal heart swelled to bursting. If Nell did not measure up to the worldly Innamoratas of Rome and Venice, why, then, neither did she, Thomasine, who had never set foot outside these environs of Florence. Nor did Richard, surely the best of all the Savages. "And I shall tell him so," she thought, darkly, "and more as well. I shall speak the truth for once, about his worthless Raimunda, run away God knows where to be the mistress of a rich old man, and his succession of brainless doxies as well." The current one, from Rome, and hired over all their heads for second maids, had no business on any stage, though she gave herself airs enough! "She will have to go," thought Thomasine. "It is my money, too!"

Indeed, Thomasine's money comprised two thirds of this summer venture. She had lent Richard and Nell the amount to make up their share, for they had bought the franchise outright from the Medici. The company would be called the Saviggi Players, and no longer the Players of Trebbio. It was a chancy thing, like all such ventures, but it might make their fortunes in time, provided all went smoothly this first season. She sighed again, heavily. "I must hold my tongue," she said to herself. "Let Edward have his doxy, it is little enough."

"She will have to go," said a voice beside her. She jumped. It was as though her own spirit argued. Edward sank down next to her and took her hand, smiling a little. "I have been watching you," he said. "Even your profile told me your thoughts."

She looked at him, seeing for the first time all the changes the years had written on his face. "They were unfair . . . my thoughts," she said. "We all have troubles. . . ."

He shook his head. "No—I should not have spoken so to Nell. I

have made my peace with her, just now. I sought her out, down yonder, where she plays nursemaid to our children. She was kind, as always. And told me where to find you. . . ."

"Yes," said Thomasine, suddenly breathless, "I thought to get a little sun. . . ."

"You smell of it," he said, his face close. "You smell of it, like the berries, and the grapes. . . ."

"There are no grapes yet," she said, a foolish answer. "I am confused," she thought, confused by this closeness, and the unseasonable warmth. She shifted, and drew away a little.

"Thomasine," said Edward, "can we not be friends again?"

"We are friends," she said. "Good friends . . . for years now."

"I never told you . . . I was away when it happened . . . I never told you how sorry I was about your husband."

"Benvenuto, yes . . ." And she gave a little sad wave of her hand to still his words. "Waving a life away," she thought, appalled. "I asked him not to go," she said, "but he said he must. He was sworn man to the Duke there at Pisa. A silly little Spanish quarrel between two ruling houses—cousins they were, the two dukes—and all over in a few days . . . except for the dead . . ."

"Whose quarrel it was not," said Edward, nodding grimly. "That is the way of the world. We are lucky to be players, and out of it, with no lord to summon us."

"He was noble," she said. "Rich as well . . . Did you know I own a bank—a little one—there in Pisa?"

"I did not, truly. But perhaps it is what drew me, underneath, to woo you."

She glanced at him sharply, and saw that he smiled. "I will not be wooed by such a one as you, my friend," she said, returning his banter. "I like the center of the stage, not the crowd scene."

"You malign me," he said. "There is no crowd. Only one wretched little apprentice. And I have given her notice—I promise you."

"There is no need to promise me anything," said Thomasine. "I am not your wife."

"I have no wife—or so she tells me." There were sharp lines beside his mouth; Thomasine, hating herself, wanted to smooth them away. "I saw her—Raimunda—in Venice. She has wed the old man."

Thomasine stared. "How . . . ?"

"It seems that Brother Thomas' marriage lines are not legal. He . . . God rest him . . . was not a true priest."

"I suppose it is true," she said, slowly, "in the eyes of the world."



She turned to him suddenly. "Then I am not a widow either—and my sons are bastards . . . but I had lawyers for the will . . . they will inherit!"

He smiled, shaking his head a little. "You sound like the Old Lady."

She tossed her head. "There is no need to stay paupers forever!"

He smiled again, the lines deepening. "It was a compliment, truly."

They were silent a moment. She shook her head sadly. "So much has happened. So much sadness."

"Good things, too." He took her hand, holding it gently in both of his. "I never saw you solemn before. Beautiful Thomasine. My Thomasine."

She did not know where to look. Her insides were shaking, and the hot tears gathered behind her eyes.

"Come inside, my sweet Thomasine. It is hot here in the sun. Come inside with me. We have wasted all our lives till now. . . ."

She felt herself move with him, up the little steps, stumbling and weak, her legs like water, into the cool, shadowed dark of the wagon. "The children . . . Nell . . . we cannot . . ." But she let herself be lowered down upon the bed. She had no strength at all.

"No one will come," he whispered, kissing her face, her hair, her hands that were held up between them. "I will bar the door. . . ."

She was naked quickly, and he, too, fire-hot against her, and the coverlet cool beneath. She thought, inertly, "He has done this so often." And then, no longer thinking, herself all fire, she moved with him, dizzy, drunken. "Together," she thought, "we are together," and the lights bursting all around, and a swooning, sharp delight.

Then it was over, the swift eternity, and she felt his weight, slippery, upon her, and saw the little room creep close around them, the clothes tumbled like laundry in a heap on the floor; a thin edge of light showed under the curtained window, and another, wider, along the door edge.

"You never barred the door," she said.

"I'll do it now," he said, and moved toward it.

"After the horse has been stolen," she murmured.

They laughed then, helplessly, clinging together. "Oh, it is so good to laugh," she said, half sobbing. "So good . . ."

"It is all so good, my Thomasine," he whispered. "We have wasted years. . . ."



"It was all your fault," she said. "I always loved you. It was all your fault. . . ."

"I know," he said. "Forgive me."

## *Interval*

And so, finally, those two, Thomasine and Edward, who seemed meant for each other if anyone ever did, came together. They were married by a true priest, tonsured and frocked, in the little Trebbio chapel, graciously lent by the Duchess for the ceremony. If they did not live happily ever after, they lived in such amity as to make them a model for all husband-and-wife teams who trod the stages after them. Who was to know that twice in their years together Edward came perilously near to begging them on his profligate liaisons with the two most expensive whores of Florence, or that Thomasine on two occasions came close to shattering his brain pan, once with a poorly padded slapstick, and once with an iron frying-pan? They had moments of high happiness, nights of delight, weeks and months of absorbing activity, and years of fame and prosperity. They could not very well ask for more, in a world of cruelty, avarice, and suffering.

Between them, they had six children to carry on the Saviggi tradition: Edward's Giulietta; Thomasine's redheads, Tommaso and Benno; and a boy and twin girls of their own union. They called the girls Sara and Sophia. The boy was named Riccardo, after his grandfather, Richard.

By the time the twins were christened, Richard himself had gone from his first and second roles of Lovers and Captains to the aged Pantaloons. It was the first time in player memory that an actor had played all three characters in one lifetime. In the comedy, one wore a role like a brand, forever. Richard's long hair was as white as alpine snow, and his face, against it, was as wrinkled and brown as leather. But his back was straight, his shoulders square, and his eyes lively and commanding. It was thought that he would live to a great age, but the marsh fever which ran through the whole company of players one summer took only him. He was not much over sixty. His wife, Red Nell, though she wheezed mightily and sometimes spent

whole days catching her breath, did not follow him until the youngest of her self-appointed Saviggi charges was grown. Nell, though her face was still smooth and pretty and her hair kept its brightness, went early into Bawds and Midwives, for she grew fatter by the day. After a time, she became so huge that she could no longer walk, and must be carried about in one of the new sedan chairs. The redheads teased her fondly in their loud young voices, pretending to reel and faint under her weight, and she bridled coquettishly, her round cheeks rosy and dimpling. To the day of her death she looked like some overblown Venus, the long eyes inviting above mounds of flesh, and the full red lips wide in a smile. Her death, when it came, was a tragedy, and a mystery.

Nell's sleeping chamber was on the ground floor, just below the bedroom of the young Giulietta, the first of the children she had raised. Giulietta, that minx, had opened her window to admit a lover (not her first, either) in the small hours of the night. Nell, awakened by the creaking of the casement, and thinking a prowler was endangering her darling, arose, laboring, from her bed, and started up the stairs, her chamberpot, for weapon, caught up in her hasty hand. The climb was too much for a lady who had not set her foot to the ground in a year; her heart failed her. In the morning she was found lifeless, at the foot of the stairs, the broken pieces of her chamberpot scattered near, like the shards of an ancient culture.

Giulietta, like the others, did not guess how Nell had fallen, or why she had attempted the stairs at all. Giulietta went her careless way, and was not marked by it. Some said she had had forty lovers by the time she was twenty years old. No Florentine censured her for it—it was an age of excesses. Besides, she was thoroughly beloved, with much of her father's talent and her mother's beauty. She had Giulia's voice, too, high and sweet as a flute song, a voice to make strong men weep. She did not end in a brothel, as Edward darkly predicted, but under a coronet. She married the prince of one of those small monarchies that dotted the old Flemish maps. None of them ever saw her again after her marriage, but for many years rich gifts arrived at Christmas and Easter, with affectionate notes signed with her name, the Princess Giulietta.

The player's art is fleeting, and leaves no record. Still, it is said that Edward was a genius. Certainly no one before or after made as much of the Pedrolino roles. Indeed, they were, as often as not, called Neddos, after him. But the part he longed to play from the beginning, the Arlecchino, he failed in. The audiences were polite,

but they could not warm to the melancholy cynic that he served up to them. They liked their Arlecchino as they had always seen him, a clever, acrobatic clown, a lovable rogue. Even his stepsons, Thomasine's red-haired sons, surpassed him, each, at first try, and his own young Riccardo was so excellent an Arlecchino that he broke his father's heart, almost literally.

The boy was playing a season in Rome during a Saviggi company's off period, and Edward, thinking to surprise him, traveled down to catch his performance. To tell the truth, it had not occurred to Edward that the boy would be more than adequate in the part. In his home troupe he had played nothing but second and third "business." It was otherwise with Thomasine. She had watched their Riccardo rehearse. Failing to dissuade Edward, she went along, and a good thing it was, in very fact. For, otherwise, who would have brought the sick man home?

The young Riccardo was so bold, so sly, so thoroughly charming a scoundrel, even in his first five minutes of stage time, that cheers and applause stopped the performance. Edward was surprised, but he took it well. Turning to Thomasine, he said, "Timing a trifle off . . . but still—he has the fire. . . ." And he clapped his hands with the rest of the crowd. But, as the scenario unfolded, Thomasine saw that, in some subtle manner, Riccardo aped his father, taking all of Edward's personal tricks and mannerisms and making them his own. His performance was growing, gradually, and ever so delicately, into the performance that his father's *should* have been. Even the melancholy and the cynicism were there, but exaggerated into buffoonery, infinitely comic, side-splitting. In the last big scene, Riccardo hunched his shoulders and wrung his long hands in a picture of complete dejection, and though he was masked, it was horrifyingly, dreadfully, Edward. When he heaved a long, windy sigh to fill the theater, Thomasine heard Edward, beside her, catch his breath. Something made her turn to him. He was frozen, staring, one long finger, so like his son's, pointed at the stage. "A thief!" he croaked. "He is a thief!" And fell, wooden, forward out of his seat, striking his head on the sharp back of the seat in front. Whether the blow or the massive stroke came first is uncertain, but certain it is that he lost consciousness then, and did not recover it. Blood poured from his head wound, but he felt nothing. His body was stiff as a corpse already.

They brought him home to Florence, where he lay for three days without change. Wine and broth trickled from his stiff lips, and

water, too, when they tried to force nourishment into him. His eyes were open, but whether he saw or not no one could tell. The poor boy, Riccardo, crept about the bed like a whipped dog, or sat humbly beside his sick father through the night, seeking for a sign from the staring eyes. On the third day, toward evening, a tear rolled slowly down Edward's cheek, and a tiny spasm flitted over his face and then was gone. A rattle began in his throat. Thomasine, hearing it, shook the boy awake. He had fallen asleep in his chair. "I think perhaps he can see you. Stand so—at the foot there—where his eyes are fixed." She pushed the boy forward. The eyes stared. Thomasine took Edward's hand; one finger moved, a slight tremor. Through the rattle, the words came, almost distinct. "Timing . . . watch timing . . ." And then silence; not even the rattling breath. Thomasine felt the hand grow cold. Her fingers moved up to the wrist. There was no pulse. After a moment she leaned forward, embracing the dead man, and whispering, "Oh, my dear—not a word for me? Not a word?" She rose and moved to Riccardo. "He forgave you . . . he forgave you, my son. . . ." The boy nodded dumbly, his face shining with tears.

Edward was not yet fifty at his death, and his Thomasine lived almost another fifty years after him, well into the next century. This was the century folk said would never come. Too much had happened already. Look at the state of things: one in ten could read, and all were free, more or less. Ships had gone to the edge of the sea and had not fallen off. New lands, far away beyond imagining, had been discovered, across that sea, with strange folk living there. Nations were forming; the Church was losing its hold on kings and nobles; soon the Devil would be loose. Yes, the world was coming to an end with the century, and some prepared for it, fasting. But the year 1599 came and went, and it was 1600. Thomasine was almost seventy, with great-grandchildren, three banks instead of one, a theater, a villa in Fiesole, and the same famous legs, only a trifle scrawny.

Her red-haired sons had some success in the comedy, but in their middle years, with wives and children, they abandoned the family calling and went into private life, managing Thomasine's considerable properties. The Pisan banks came to be known as the Ricci banks, for Tommaso and Benno had never taken the Saviggi name, but kept their father's. They were two of Pisa's most respected citizens, and in later life, the younger, Benno, was mayor for two terms. And so they must pass from our story.

The girl twins, Sara and Sophia, were alike as two roses on the



same stem, and looked it as well. They combined their parents' looks, the neat, perfect, round-cheeked prettiness of Thomasine with Edward's dark eyes and hair, a startling black, white, and pink effect, and much admired. Scenarios were devised with twin roles, princesses lost and brought up in rustic simplicity, or the reverse, or one poor, one rich, but separated and brought together by a kindly chance. Such plots have since been done to death, but they were fresh then, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The girls brought, between them, no little luster to the Saviggi name. Each married an actor and had actor children to swell the ranks. It is their descendants, many times removed, along with their brother's, who take up the thread of our tale, after yet another century.

Riccardo became as famous as his father, if not more so. The role of Arlecchino is said to have been brought to the full flower of its perfection in his hands. To many, he *was* Arlecchino. He, too, married within the profession, and his children and grandchildren were members of the comedy. Farther than that we will not take them now, those who came after Edward and Thomasine. Except to say that, in the hundred years and more that followed, no one among them ever forgot that they were English, their true name Savage, and their home the island of Britain, a continent away.





BOOK TWO



London, 1752

## Chapter 1

Drury Lane was not old, as theaters go, barely a half-century, but it smelled musty, particularly in the little manager's office at the top of a rickety flight of stairs.

The actor-manager, David Garrick, wrinkled his fine nose. "Yes. Definitely," he said. "Smells like a cellar."

"Open a window," said Charles Lacey, his partner. Immediately a gust of wind blew a pile of papers off the desk onto the floor. From the street came a blood-curdling cry, the sounds of blows, clattering feet, and another cry, louder. Neither man paid any attention. It was as though they were deaf. Garrick put a handkerchief to his face, waving his hand impatiently. "Close it again, Charles . . . I've got half of London in my eye!"

A true Londoner, of course, *was* deaf to the street noises. His sense of smell had perforce been blunted as well. Mr. Garrick was oversensitive, an understandable oddity, for he was a personage. Already, at thirty-five, he was hailed as the greatest actor of his age. He was at his prime, onstage and off; he had a haughty profile, a mobile mouth, a glittering eye, eloquent hands, and a well-turned leg, smoothly stockinged in silk. He took a large pinch of snuff from a little silver box. "This will take care of the must," he said, confidently, and gave a great sneeze.

Mr. Garrick dressed beautifully and fastidiously, in the latest fashion. As a news wag put it, he wore, "his fortune on his back." Mr. Lacey, quite otherwise, was downright disreputable, his stock awry, his waistcoat stained, his breeches dusty and his hose wrinkled. Contrary to custom, but like all in the theater, both men wore their own hair. Lacey's, brown and dusty-looking like his breeches, was cropped across just below the ears. Garrick's, longer for versatility of roles, was thick, glossy, and a dark walnut color, clubbed behind with a ribbon.

This was the fifth year of their partnership; it had come to resemble a marriage. In fact, Mr. Garrick had been heard to say that now he need not give up his bachelor status, for his curiosity about wedded bliss had been satisfied. This remark was probably made for the ears of Peg Woffington, his leading lady, however; that lady had

tried more than once to trap him, to no avail. Unlike many marriages, though, this partnership was a success. Mr. Lacey disliked acting and all to do with it. His domain was the business end, the receipts, the promotion of the company, the supervising of scenery design and building, and, of course, the payroll. Mr. Garrick undertook to play leading roles, direct the plays, choose authors and actors, coach, and so on. It was all the more surprising, then, that the business they had met this day to discuss concerned Garrick's hiring of an entire company of Italian comedians, to alternate their performances at Drury Lane with those of Garrick's own troupe. Just two days past he had arrived in England, thus concluding the trip to Florence that he had made especially to see the Italian company on home ground. He had signed them on the spot.

This was not so strange as it may seem. Every London theater had its share of harlequinades, as they were called, shamelessly stolen from the Italians, and much debased in the theft. Mr. Rich's farces and dumb shows, begun in 1715, were still packing them in at Lincoln's Inn Fields and at Covent Gardens, and the pantomime was all the rage, but it had been many a long year since the real thing had been seen in a London theater. Not, perhaps, as Mr. Garrick figured it, since the days of the Virgin Queen, great Elizabeth, a century and a half back. "The time is ripe!" he declared, and proceeded to act upon his words. With a true Garrick flourish, he produced a long paper closely covered with printed words: the contract.

Lacey scanned it quickly with his professional eye, turning it over to see the signatures upon the back. "Great God, Davy . . . you have given them fifty percent!"

"Over the sum of twelve hundred pounds taken in . . . take note of that!" He shrugged. "Besides—there are more of them . . . they need it!"

"Oh, Davy, Davy," said Lacey, shaking his head. It was a token protest, however, and both men knew it; Garrick had made a real bargain. The King of France, just last season, had paid this very company, the Saviggis, twice the sum for only six performances, and in Spain they commanded full box-office monies and no rent.

"They count themselves English, you see," said Garrick. "Which is why we are getting them cheap."

Lacey no longer pretended pique, but turned a curious face. "How is that? I thought they were one of the oldest Italian comedy families."

"But originally—the first Saviggis came from London. The name was Savage . . . they trace themselves clear back to Agincourt."

"Savage . . . Savage . . . isn't there a ragtail troupe that keeps an inn Thameside, puts on cockfights, wrestling—bearbaiting, too, I believe?"

"So Andrea said. Andrea is the manager, plays the Harlequins, and fathered most of the company, or so it would seem. He said the inn was given to the first Savages by Henry V himself!"

"And the Italians have kept in touch, have they?" asked Lacey. "These London Savages are known to them?"

"To my knowledge, no," said Garrick. "I believe they are most anxious to look up the English cousins, as they call them."

"Rather distant cousins, I should think, by now," said Lacey with a smile. "How many generations have passed—a dozen?"

"True," said Garrick. "But you have not met these Saviggis. Like royalty they are, there in Florence."

"They'll get a rude shock when they meet their kinsmen, then," laughed Lacey. "I'll wager that crew spends more time in Newgate than in their theater."

Garrick raised his eyebrows. "That bad, is it?"

"Well, bearbaiting is outlawed. Cockfights, too, for that matter, though it is winked at." He shrugged. "They surely operate without a license, whatever entertainments they provide there. We ourselves know how outrageous the court fees are."

"Well," laughed Garrick, "fortunately, that is not our affair. The Italian branch seems to be quite well off. They own two theaters in Florence—leased to the opera, of course, like most theaters there."

"Which explains why they are willing to tour," said Lacey, with a keen glance.

"Ah, yes, alas . . . the Comedy is a stepchild there, where it was born. The Opera is all the rage now." Garrick shook his head sadly. "A pity. I myself can see nothing in it—all that bellowing!"

Lacey suppressed a smile. It was well known that the great Garrick had no ear. He folded the contract. "I shall file this, with your permission, then. When can we expect the Italians?"

"Oh, soon," said Garrick, vaguely. "They are chartering a vessel."

"They are so many, then?"

"Counting babies and octogenarians, they are as the sands of the desert!"

Even allowing for the extravagance of player speech, it was almost so. There was a bewildering number of Saviggis of all shapes and



sizes. On the day of their arrival, Drury Lane, a respectably spacious house, swarmed with them—in the office, belowstairs, onstairs, trying out the seats, inspecting the dressing-rooms, testing the boards of the stage. To be fair, there were no octogenarians and only two rather small children, already stagewise and behaving, truth to tell, rather better than their elders. The ceiling rang with soft Italianate cries; broken English bounced off the walls and bubbled along the tiers of seats; melodies of flute and viol snatched at the air; feet sounded in all the passages. Garrick was charmed; the Woffington less so. She stormed into the little upstairs office, in a cloud of shimmering anger and attar of roses.

"They cannot have my dressing-room, Davy! How dare you permit it!"

"My dear," began Garrick, mildly, "I am sure—"

From an armchair behind the desk rose an elegant figure, tall and rapier-thin. He wore a beautifully crafted, full-bottomed wig, every hair in place. It was liberally powdered, but not a speck showed on the shoulders of his black velvet coat. Lace foamed like the sea at his throat and wrists, and gold rosettes bloomed at the knees of his skin-tight breeches. His eyes were warm and dark. "Do I have the pleasure of addressing Mistress Woffington, the English Rose?"

"Oh, a thousand pardons!" cried Garrick. "Of course you have not met. Peg, my dear, this is Master Andrea Saviggi, of Florence, the King of Comedy. Master Saviggi, Mistress Peg."

"You do me too much honor, sir," said Andrea, with a little movement that managed to look like a royal nod, but had in it no condescension. Garrick took note; he would have to practice. Andrea took Peg Woffington's hand, kissing it lightly. She simpered, there was no other word for it. "La, sir," she said, tapping him lightly with her fan ("Where had it appeared from?" thought Garrick), "you surely do not mean to usurp my dressing-room?"

Andrea put his hand to his heart. "Never, lady . . . I swear it! You must forgive the foreign artists—they have never set foot in an English theater. It is all so new—though, of course, you understand, we are all of us English in our beginnings."

Peg's eyebrows, plucked to a hairline, lifted. "Ah? How so?"

"The first Saviggis held a grant from Harry of Monmouth. Sir Hercules Savage was knighted on the field at Agincourt!"

"How fascinating," she murmured. It was plain to see she had never heard of the great conquest of France. She could read, but just

enough to commit her lines to memory, and they had never played the Shakespeare chronicles at Drury Lane.

"Three centuries ago, that was, Peg," said Garrick.

Her eyebrows went even higher. "Fancy!" she cried softly. "No wonder your accent is so good!"

The men laughed, their eyes meeting. Andrea bowed. "Thank you, lovely lady." He was past his middle years, but did not look it. His skin was a smooth olive mask that looked as though it were stretched over the bones. Garrick, peering, suspected makeup, but could not detect it. An Italian trick, he thought; I must get him to confide it. (He never did, of course, for Andrea did not know the secret himself.)

Other secrets, however, were known in common by all the Italian comedians; not least among them the heady secret of success. For, with their first performance, a rough translation of *Arlecchino and the Doctors*, all London was at their feet, and Mistress Woffington begged Andrea to take her dressing-room on for his own use, for by this canny stroke of the management she would become rich, and all her fellow actors with her, by the end of the first season! Indeed, before the year was out, the Italians were playing in the King's good English and had been rechristened, with the various spellings of Savedge or Savitch, and their character names were household words. "'E's a regular Neddo," might be said of a son more doltish than the next, or "Watch out for that one—he's an 'Arlechin," to denote a crafty peddler.

The Comedy had come a long way since the days of the first Saviggis. Certain of the older players, who remembered the days of their youth, thought that the road had been downhill, and shook their heads, despairing, at the changes. True, the plots had grown more subtle and sophisticated, the edges of some of the characters had softened, the lover roles had lost touch with reality and were merely pretty pawns. On the other hand, the situations were not so broad, spoken obscenities were fined, along with lewd gestures and indecent costumes. The great innovation, accomplished by the author-manager Goldoni some few years before, was the absence of masks. Gone was the drooping nose that met the Pantaloon's chin, gone the black visage of Harlequin, vanished were the warts, the wens, the swollen features. "Sometimes in the little market towns you will see them still," said Andrea, sadly. "There only is the real thing—the old Comedy. Indeed, the peasant folk make the sign of the evil eye at a bare-faced player. Tradition dies hard in the coun-

try." There was an unmistakable regret in his voice. Garrick pondered it, for to him the wearing of masks seemed an unwieldy and limiting thing. It was true that the Italians wore very heavy, exaggerated makeup, making them unrecognizable off the stage. As Harlequin, for instance, Andrea wore a face as dark as a Moor's, eyes lengthened until they very nearly reached his ears, and a bright vermilion mouth that curved like a snake. And, Garrick noted, none of the players used their faces for the expression of thoughts or feelings, but relied upon gesture and mime. Was that, he asked himself, what accounted for the unnatural smoothness of the faces when washed of paint? For not Andrea alone, but all the players, even the ancient gaffers and crones, were curiously unlined. It was something to remember for that time, much later, when age would threaten. He stored it away.

Garrick never truly sorted out the Italians, for they all called themselves Saviggis, some thirty of them. The nucleus of the troupe was small, perhaps a round dozen or less, depending upon the play. But for each part the Saviggis had an understudy in case of illness or indisposition. Garrick himself called for only two general understudies for all the men and women in his troupe. He did not doubt that they were, as they insisted, all members of the same family, but the relationships were somewhat bewildering.

For instance, Andrea's nephew Cosimo played lovers opposite Andrea's second wife, who also claimed descent, but from another branch. By this time, of course, there were many branches of that same genealogical tree. An aunt and uncle (another branch?) took the Pantaloons and Old Wives, Pedrolino was a third cousin, and Brighella a fourth. Some of the women players were kin by birth and some by marriage, and the same held true for seamstresses, understudies, and dressers. There were no outsiders in this troupe.

Drury Lane was always crowded now, night and day, on both sides of the footlights. Business was good, with the variety of two successful companies, and there was always someone in the ticket booth, selling, making change, and turning the latecomers away. It was a gratifying sight, to be sure. Garrick, however, found it difficult to get used to so many onlookers at rehearsals. The Italians seemed to virtually *live* in the theater, roaming the empty aisles, trying out the seats, listening in the gallery for faulty acoustics, applauding newly rehearsed business, laughing at all the untried jokes. They even brought food, cooking it over small spirit lamps!

Unlike the English, they seemed to need no rehearsals at all. They

were famous for the art of improvisation, of course, but Garrick noticed that each play was played in precisely the same way at each performance. A character might perhaps prolong a piece of business or embellish an action for a particularly enthusiastic audience, but the words remained exact, the plot itself did not change. Though they did not rehearse in a group, they were constantly practicing gesture, mime, dance, and song, singly or in pairs, with, to his eyes, a complete lack of system or order. Still, he thought, however it is done, it works and magnificently. And, he noted further, there was no scene-stealing, no "upstaging," no "stepping on laughs." When he spoke of it to Andrea, for they had become very close in a short time, the Italian said, smiling, "Oh, we are not such angels! There is a stiff fine for every one of these encroachments . . . even to the slightest. It could add up to a pretty penny, as you might say . . . and then," and he drew himself up proudly, "it is frowned upon, you know, among us Saviggis."

After the first week or so, Garrick felt that he knew all of these actors, by sight or a bit better, for they were always about and wore an easy grace and a friendly, out-going manner. One afternoon, though, as he finished rehearsal, he brushed against a slight, dark girl who stood in his path backstage. He had been working on the ghost scene in *Hamlet*, and he felt he had not yet got it right. He was preoccupied. "Oh—pardon, my dear," he murmured as he jostled her. He was startled to see, in the dim, scenery-piled area, a face that burned like a brand. He was sure he had never laid eyes on it before.

"Oh, my daughter Miranda, it must be," said Andrea afterwards, with an unreadable look. "She is your great admirer. I hope she has not annoyed you . . . she is always creeping ever closer to watch you at work."

"Oh, no, not at all. It is just that I do not recall seeing her before. Although I must have. . . ."

"Perhaps not," said Andrea. "She is—a little shy." He sounded puzzled.

"It is an arresting face," said Garrick, remembering it. Large eyes set on a slant above high cheekbones, a full mouth with a sulky lower lip, a long neck, cloudy dark hair falling onto slender, childish shoulders. "I hope I shall have the pleasure of watching her work," he said.

"Oh, my friend," said Andrea, "that is highly unlikely. She covers several parts, but I fear she does well in none of them." For once, a sharp line appeared in the smooth space between his eyebrows; he



shrugged expressively. "Perhaps she has no talent. It is a hard thing for me to admit, but . . ." He shook his head, looking sad.

"She is very young, surely?" said Garrick.

"Nineteen . . . But she has been studying since she was a small child. Indeed, when she was small we all thought she would have a fine future. But now that she is grown . . . and reasonably handsome . . . it all seems to have been in vain. Her singing voice is true, but light. It would not carry beyond the first four rows. Her dancing . . . pedestrian. She works hard, she does as she is bid, she is 'up' in all the roles. Intelligent, yes . . . but the spirit, the grace—it is not there." He spread his hands in a wry Italian gesture. "Truth to tell," he laughed a little, "she is dull. Most of the time her head is stuck in a book."

"Perhaps," said Garrick, "she simply lacks experience."

"I have given her two seasons in the country, and tried her out on odd days in second maids and Innamoratas, too. She is passable as an Innamorata—after all, she is quite pretty. But any young apprentice can do as well. And in rustics she is impossible, awkward and slow . . . the audience seems to frighten her." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Odd—you know, once in a pinch I had to put her on in the part of Pantaloon's wife, an old woman, a toothless crone. She overdid it, of course—she was fifteen at the time—but, you know, she was almost good! One would never have recognized her." He laughed. "Perhaps in fifty years . . ."

Garrick was shocked; he thought his friend quite heartless. Besides, the girl's face glowed still in his mind. And then, she had been watching him act, had she not? She could not be all that impossible. He fancied himself as a coach. He resolved to speak.

"My friend," he said, with an air of diffidence, "I wonder . . . might I . . . Oh, yes, how is her English? Can she read English easily?"

"Oh, yes. I have said—she is very intelligent."

"I would like to have a try at coaching her. Sometimes, you know, the closest kin makes the least able teacher. Perhaps, with you, she tries too hard."

"You have my permission, certainly. I will send her to you. But—don't expect too much. . . ."

And so she came, the swan reared among the famous ducklings, and was taught by the great Garrick himself, and the Savages took yet another road.



## Chapter 2

Miranda was shy and silent, almost furtive. Garrick thought, amused, that she had the look of a creature not bred to houses, something timid and wild, a forest thing. "What on earth ails the girl?" he thought, and led her to a chair.

There was no longer a private spot in the theater, and he had thought it best to hear her here, in his own drawing-room in New Hadley Square. It was comfortable enough, airy and spacious, with a great uncurtained window that looked out onto a private court, green still and away from the noise of horses and traps. The chair he had given her was large and cushioned, red velvet, with arms wide enough to accommodate the new stiffened skirts, but she perched on the edge of it, ready to jump and run. "At least," he thought, "she has been trained well." Her ankles, trim and neat, were crossed, and her hands folded lightly in her lap. She knew how to sit still. Only the poise of her small head on its long neck betrayed the wary tension underneath.

Someone had dressed her unpowdered hair high (was she so clever?) and a little hat, flat as a pancake, sat modishly atop it, over one eye, making her older. Her dress was new and well cut, but the wrong color, a trying shade of mauve that cried out for fair skin. The girl looked twice her age and positively sallow. It irked him, like a tasteless line in a play.

The silence grew heavy. He cleared his throat. "And how did you leave your good father?" he asked, with an encouraging nod and a smile.

"Oh." She raised her eyes and looked at him. "I have not seen him today." There was not the shadow of an expression on her face. Garrick was dismayed. Could Andrea have been right, then? Was the girl a fool?

"Yes," he said, politely, "but then yesterday—last evening—I trust he is in good health?"

Her eyes held a tiny startle which he could not read. "He played last night."

"Oh, yes, so he did." Confound the girl, she was putting him in

the wrong! "Ah . . . well . . ." He was at a loss for words suddenly. "Will you take tea?"

The startle deepened, widening her eyes. "Oh, no, I have just now had breakfast."

Of course, it was not yet ten o'clock; what could he be thinking of? "I am an early riser," he said. "Still . . . I will not take tea either. Perhaps later."

There was a silence again; a great lassitude came over him. He wondered why he had ever made this suggestion, a waste.

"You wanted me to read?" she asked.

"It might be interesting . . . but I would not push you to it."

"Father said I must."

The Devil! He was exasperated. "Look, my dear . . . I want to help you. But if you do not wish it . . ."

She made a little movement; her cheek caught the light, tracing the pattern of a tear. He was instantly contrite.

"Do not be nervous, child. I am not an ogre."

"Father thinks me hopeless. They all do."

"Well . . . and what do *you* think?"

"I cannot tell." A stubborn look came over her face. "It is . . . I find the words of the Comedy so meaningless."

"What about Shakespeare's words?"

"Sometimes—when you play—they are real. Sometimes they are beautiful, but silly."

The baggage! She did not mince words. Sometimes . . . it was a wry thought. "Let us try some words of Shakespeare, then. What do you think you might get the meaning of . . . easily?"

"The men's parts are the best . . . but last night I read *Macbeth*. I learned the part where his wife is sleep-walking. I would like to do that scene."

"No, no, no!" he said, waving his hand. "We do not fly before we can walk! It is too difficult—you are too young for it, at any rate. Is that all you have read?"

"Oh, no—I have read all . . . every play, and some of them several times."

"Good! Then we will try some of Juliet."

"The nurse is a better part. Juliet is a ninny."

He fixed her with a stern eye. "We have old women to play our nurses. You must learn to play close to yourself." He opened his desk and took out two small books. "These are easy to handle. I had them printed up especially for acting copies."

"Oh, I don't need a book. I know all of the play from memory."

He stared. "Very well. Let us begin with the balcony scene. I will take Romeo. Go on . . . He is beneath, but she does not know it, and speaks to the night. Begin."

She did not rise, but clasped her hands together and lifted her head. "'Ah, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? A rose by any other name would—'"

"Stop!" he cried, raising his hand. "Too fast! You are running the words together. Take your time. Begin again. And, this time, take a breath after the second 'Romeo' . . . it will carry you to the end of the line. Try it again."

She did as she was told, gaining a bit of confidence as she went. Her speech was excellent, the English that a foreigner learns, more perfect than a native's. Her voice was well modulated and pleasant, if monotonous. She had got the meaning, but there was no ardor, no grace. Very well, there was some merit still. He let her finish the speech, and answered her as Romeo, speaking the lines with an easy youthful passion. She improved, warming to him, taking his tone. They finished the scene. He looked at her. Red spots had come out on her cheekbones and along her throat, blotching it. "So—good! The wench has some feeling, if she cannot express it." He considered her for a moment before he spoke.

"Miranda, my dear," he said. "I do not agree with the others. You are not hopeless. Not good . . . but not hopeless. Shall I go on?"

"Yes." He saw her stiffen as if she expected a blow. The discipline in the Comedy must be very brutal indeed, he thought. Well, that was all to the good. "First off—in some things you are way ahead of other young actresses. You have been taught well. You do not fidget—you do not grimace—you have a good pace. Your voice is fine, low and with a promise of power. But, my dear, you simply speak the words with sense. There is no feeling. Why?"

She looked stubborn again. "I do not understand Juliet."

"Why not? She is so much like you. She is young, well bred, innocent. The only difference is—she is in love. Can you not imagine that?"

"Yes," she said, hesitantly. "But—I do not understand why she talks about roses!"

He waved his hand impatiently. "That is nothing . . . a convention. The poet waxes poetical. You do not need to understand it. Get the emotion and the poetry will come. Listen, my dear. Juliet has seen a young man she fancies more than any other young man

on earth. But that young man she must not want—because he has a family name that her parents abhor. They will not sanction this love . . . they will forbid her to see this young man, much less wed with him.”

“Yes!” she burst out. “It is so silly! Such things do not happen! What does a family matter? What does a name matter?”

“Ah, yes!” he said, triumphant. “That is exactly what she says! ‘What’s in a name?’”

“I see . . . Yes, I see. . . . ‘A rose by any other name’—I do see. But the plot is so silly! Her family would not behave so!”

“Ah, but they would! Many would. Your own, no. They are not so conventional. But would they allow you to throw yourself into the arms of a married man, for instance?”

She sat very still, suddenly, as if struck. The color, already bright, deepened in her cheeks to flame. “I can do it now. Let me try it now!”

This time it was Garrick who warmed to his Juliet. When the scene was over he realized that he had acted the part as with an equal. The girl had shown only a glimpse, but a blazing glimpse, of what her Juliet could be, agonizingly young, heartbreakingly in love, shameless, raw, and intense. His flesh crept as it always did when he was moved by a stageworthy moment.

He took a deep breath, and said, “That is better—a good deal better. It is a beginning. . . .” He saw that she was trembling. Poor child, she had the temperament. “And that will be enough for today, I think. Now I shall ring for tea. Are you thirsty?”

“Yes,” she said, sounding surprised, her hand at her throat.

“It always happens,” he said. “Dries one up. Well, my dear, I shall tell your father that in my opinion you can make an actress—in time. Shall I tell him that you want to work under Garrick?”

“Oh, sir,” she breathed softly. “Oh, yes!”

“No parts at first—just working, studying . . . and then perhaps a little part, if we progress.” He stopped, facing her, and taking her by the shoulders. “But there is one thing you must promise me.”

“Oh, yes—anything . . .”

“Never wear that color again!”



## Chapter 3

In six weeks David Garrick put his new discovery, the Italian actress Miranda Savage, on the stage of Drury Lane in his own production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. She appeared only briefly as Octavia, the abandoned Roman wife, but it served to whet the critics' appetites. Even the sternest of them named her "promising," and several expressed the desire to see her in the title role. Garrick, too foxy for that, cast her next as Goneril to his Lear. Her notices were so good they quite eclipsed poor, pretty Peg Woffington's Cordelia. That lady stormed the Drury Lane office in a storm of tears, threatening to sue. "For you have given her the better part!" she cried. "Very well," said Garrick, and promptly switched the roles, a diversion which served to sell out the house for a month. It did not help Mistress Woffington, though. Young Miranda was, if anything, better cast in the Cordelia, her nubile innocence touching and delicate, her straightforward delivery the embodiment of womanly virtue. "You have truly worked a miracle!" vowed Andrea, the girl's father. "Of course," he added, with a darkling smile, "she will never play comedy."

"Wait," said Garrick, looking smug.

The morning lessons continued. Miranda worked hard. She had been accustomed to such labor all her life, without reward. To her natural stamina, success added the spur. She drove ever onward. Miranda was not overly ambitious; the approval of the critics did not move her, nor did applause, though sweet, set her heart to racing. On the other hand, the casual praise of her fellow Savages tingled along her veins. Her fourth cousin, Tonio, the Brighella of the family troupe, had reached out to her backstage, his hand warm on hers, his faun's eyes glowing, and said, "I never knew you were so beautiful, little Miranda." The words thundered silently in her ears when she lay down to sleep and sang with the first bird notes of the morning. For she had loved him, Tonio, ever since she could remember.

Tonio Savage was a golden creature, one of those rare beings on whom fortune seems to smile without stint. Audiences had loved him from the first time he stepped on a stage as a small boy. If there



had been stars in the comedy, Tonio would have been its brightest. As it was, he drew all eyes, as if he wore a magnet beneath his bright, ragged costume. He had been put into Brighella roles at fourteen, in the provinces. Now, at twenty-five, he *was* Brighella, sly, outrageously wicked, and utterly charming. He sang well, danced better, and could play any instrument that was put into his hands. He could tumble, juggle, leap, and whirl: he looked, even in his rags, like a Hermes done by Praxiteles. His round head, covered in close fair curls, rose from a splendid column of throat; middling tall, he was compact and lightly muscled, with legs as strong and straight as the trunks of trees. He had been accustomed since childhood to the adoration of women, and treated each one, duchess or kitchen trull, with the same careless grace. After a succession of light loves, he had two years ago married the beautiful Lucia Lamberti, called "The Nightingale of Florence." She was still there, in the new opera house, by the terms of her last contract, which would run out in the spring. Then, she had announced with a fine resolve, she would leave the opera forever, and join her darling Tonio in London, playing the second maids. It would be a great comedown, and no one quite believed it, though it had already been announced in the press.

Tonio, however, insisted that his Lucia would come, for, as he said with a mocking and mercurial smile, "the poor wench loves me." Miranda did not doubt it. Was she not just such a poor wench herself? Not that she spared even this much thought for the absent wife. After all, she barely knew her. Tonio, too, did not long overmuch for pretty Lucia. She was out of sight, out of mind, as the saying goes, and in truth the little cousin, so many times removed, had blossomed almost overnight, and was downright intriguing. It was even rumored that she was the great Garrick's mistress!

In truth, she was not, far from it, but the rumor persisted. Miranda, abysmally innocent, never thought to deny it, and Garrick, having learned the advantage of most forms of publicity, let it go. There were salacious verses, thinly disguised, and lewd songs as well. Folk craned their necks to spy on Miranda as she came and went from her morning lessons at Garrick's mansion. She put it down to English curiosity, so unlike Italian nonchalance, and held her head high. The theater thrived upon it: comedy and drama alike played to full houses at Drury Lane.

It must be admitted that Garrick had thought of more than coaching. Miranda's elusive beauty had struck him, it will be remembered, even in the backstage gloom. But to his every subtle glance and ges-

ture she responded not at all. One cannot seduce a blank wall! Nor would he, for pride, make a bolder advance. There were plenty of other women. Indeed, except for her unerring professionalism, he thought her rather stupid. He had taught her how to dress; she did not follow fashion now, but set it. Her colors were pale blues and yellows, shell pinks and virginal whites, with amber and garnet velvets set aside for the winter months. She chose the simplest lines, caught in at the waist by wide ribbon sashes, and her hair was loose, ribboned too. She wore no paint, powder, or patches, and went as pale as polished bone, a trick that deepened her eyes to black smoke. He taught her, too, to walk with a pliant sway, to keep a long swan neck, a high-held chin, and a grave, sweet face. She was likened to Diana, and sometimes Minerva. In her practice mornings she mastered most of Shakespeare's women, and some, also, of the lesser playwrights. Most of the roles were too old for her still, onstage, and Juliet, alas, she did not perform until, like most other actresses, she was too old for it.

The Savage family troupe was proud of its youngest's success, and boasted of Miranda's prowess in another kind of theater, speaking of it, indeed, almost with awe. Perhaps it is true, as they say, that every comedian secretly longs to play tragedy. But privately they thought her still an odd sort of girl, a "cold fish." Except for Tonio, who knew better, but never told.

From that first quickening of interest and the whispered, easy compliment, Tonio, moved to a casual mischief, contrived a snatched conversation, a hand-holding in a dark corner, a shared cup of ale in the common room of the Savages' lodging-house. At one performance he flung a song, meant for Miranda, where she stood in the wings watching; he taught her a dance step; he walked her home, with the two small Savage children as unwitting chaperones. He was amused; flirtation was fun. He had not so much as kissed her, and perhaps never would.

But Miranda, as dedicated as an acolyte and as intense as a brushfire, would not have it so. One windy night, late, through the pounding rain upon the roof, Tonio heard a soft knocking at his bedroom door. He slept under the eaves, on the top floor, to avoid sharing. Indeed, he was undressed already and in his bed. He had not yet blown out his candle and was reading a new speech by it, a very funny one which he meant to introduce next day in the third act. He opened the door; it was Miranda, her own candle wavering to the

tremble of her hand. "What is it, my dear . . . ? Is something amiss? What do you want?"

She shut the door and stood leaning against it, her face very white and frightened. Her eyes, always large, were great inky smudges.

She stared for a moment, then wet her lips and spoke. "I want you to make love to me."

And so he took her, as easily as picking an apple off a tree.

## Chapter 4

There was never such intrigue, such subterfuge, such planning, such hole-in-corner meetings! It was more suited to espionage than to the rhapsodies of love. Miranda, to be sure, could not care. She would have shouted her love from the theater roof, or from the stage itself. She was obsessed, addicted, literally sick with love. Tonio, however, would not make a move without elaborately plotting it. "It adds spice," he said, firmly, and Miranda, poor doormat, did as he told her.

Tonio was quite right, of course, seeing that his intentions were not honorable. He did not worry that it might come to the ears of his bride. He could talk her around. But Tonio, asset though he was to the troupe, was far from indispensable. If Andrea were to discover this "seduction" of his daughter, he would be perfectly capable of ruining Tonio forever. Seduction, Tonio thought wryly—the girl had fairly flung herself into his arms!

So, like thieves, the pair slipped away by separate paths and labyrinthine ways, to meet "by chance" in some out-of-the-way corner far from the haunts of the thespian world. Or they took the two children, rather neglected among the wonders of this new country, on excursions into parks, museums, or on the winding waters of the Thames. Over the flushed childish faces they exchanged secret glances, and spoke cryptically, like oracles. They made love in odd places—behind the curtains of a hired hack, in the unlit wardrobe room, among the musty trunks. Once, in the closed theater at night, on Garrick's office desk, giggling.

Miranda never thought where it would lead. She was, as might be

said of one of her own tragic heroines, "in the grip of destiny." Once, much later, in another time and place, she watched a moth hurl itself again and again at the chimney of a lighted lamp till finally, worn out, battered, and singed, it fell, to flutter feebly and die. She watched, pitiless but without rancor, remembering. And then she smiled, that future self, and said, "But *you* did not die . . ." and rose, briskly, to sweep the dead thing away.

No, she did not die; she was even happy. It was months before she realized that it was she who sought the secret brush of hand against hand, the meaningful glance, the casual word fraught with sweet duplicity. She, too, it was who crept to his room by night, and she who must be reminded of the dawn. She lived at her lessons, and upon the stage itself, and she lived when she was with Tonio. At other times she might have been sleepwalking.

She hardly saw the ancient inn, blackened by an old fire, and halfhidden in a forgotten alley, that had been those far-off Savage ancestors' first home, though Andrea and the others, including her own Tonio, exclaimed over it with smiles and tears. She tiptoed with the others through disused, cobwebby chambers smelling of dust, cabbage, and mold, and nearly missed her footing on the worn stone stairs, hollowed deeply by centuries of feet. She tested the rotting boards of the stage, at shoulder height in the old fashion, and felt the frayed rope of the ladder which had once climbed its side. They looked, all of them, marveling, at the faded colors of the Lancaster arms which hung still above the inn door, and the creaking wooden sign with the half-obliterated black beast, so comically drawn, with its short legs and its grinning mouthful of teeth. It was she who spotted the faint traces of whiskers. "It is a cat," she said, "or a panther, perhaps. . . ."

"Yes," came the coarse, street-accented voice of that other Savage, or Savitch, who held the deed to the place. "That's what it be called, your worships—The Panther and the Smile. 'Tis writ there in the paper I gave you. I seen it myself . . . I can read some."

Andrea scanned the scrap of yellowed parchment, dry and almost parting along the fold. A rag of scarlet still hung from it, embedded in the cracked wax of the seal. The writing, crabbed but perfect in the old style, was still strong and black. "He's signed it! Look!" And he held it out in shaking fingers. Miranda had never seen him so, her debonair father. At the bottom of the parchment it read in a bold scrawl, flourished under, "Henri Roi." and the date in Roman numerals. She was too poor at her figures to translate it into modern



years. Tonio did. "Fourteen twenty, is it not?" peering close. "After Agincourt, that is . . ."

"That is what we shall call the theater—Agincourt Field!" cried Andrea. For they meant to have it, the ancient tumbledown building, and at any price.

"I couldn't let it go to just anyone," said the clownish owner, looking sly. "Have to keep it in the family, so to speak. Not were you to offer me fifty guineas, even. . . ." Fifty guineas was a pittance. The poor fellow had most likely never seen two guineas to rub together, not in his lifetime. Before Andrea could speak, Tonio said, "Forty-five. We'll give you forty-five, my man. And we're Savages . . . we'll prove it!"

And so it was done, then and there, like a clandestine exchange, the money clanking, coin of the realm. If the fellow that they called Big Will had had his teeth, he would have bitten each piece. Big Will (surely a kinsman?) grinned cavernously and called in his brother and the two gin-soaked drabs, their wives, to witness it. A swarm of shock-headed children, bare skinny legs blue with the cold, stood peering, solemn, from behind their mothers' skirts, cuffed carelessly away when they got too close.

"'Ere," said Big Will, pulling from a trunk a pile of ill-assorted books and papers, "'ere's somewhat to go along with the King's grant. I read it all once. Our fam'ly tree, it is, from ol' Bess's time. . . ."

It lay before them, a treasure—ledgers, handwritten, sketches, old broadsides, the ink smudged by the ancient press, letters, advertisements . . . they could not think where to look first. "Oh, God," breathed Andrea, awed. "Look! 'Four apes, a catamount, black of color, and a boy apprentice, aged eight, received of Master Emlyn . . . two crowns, four shillings, paid.' Signed, 'Sir Hercules Savage, and Moll Savage, her mark' . . . here, the X . . . here it is!"

"So old!" came a soft cry from one of the pretty Italian ladies; easy tears brimmed over, making the paint run. "Let me see!" cried another, snatching at the paper.

Andrea held it high. "Let be!" he commanded. "They are fragile, all of them . . . and precious. Later you may all look closely." He took up another, a scrap such as might hold a grocery list; his face was still and grave. "'This day was my fair son, Beau, hanged by the King's Grace, and pardoned after, too late. God Save the King.'" And now tears stood in his eyes, too.

Big Will shuffled noisily and crossed himself, grinning. He pointed



over his shoulder. "This 'ere's another Beau. They been after 'im, too. The law can no way keep up so far . . . but best take yer share, Brother Beau, and get you to the country." There came a cackle from the women, and a wicked flash of a black eye from Beau, a swarthy creature, lean and hungry, with a scarecrow grace. He did not speak, but a thin little voice piped from the shadows, "I be another Beau. Look you, Sirs and Ladies, I can stand on my hands, and talk ape talk!" And there, suddenly, was a small, upside-down mite, rags fluttering about his dangling head, chanting a sort of gabble. Quickly he righted himself, spun like a top, did a jig, puffed out his bird chest and strutted, with a merry, roving eye: the very picture, in little, of our Tonio.

They laughed, all, for the child was very comical, and pretty, too, for all his dirt and rags. He warmed to his chance audience, doffed an imaginary cap to Miranda, and drawing himself up, became a dazed and love-struck maiden, swaying his narrow hips and wringing his small hands. She blushed nervously, and there was more laughter; the little one bowed with a flourish fit for court, holding out his cupped hands for pennies.

He was about nine, but small for his age; lank hair hung to his shoulders, the yellow of it showing plain through the dirt; his eyes were round and large, as blue as cornflowers. "'Tis mine," said Big Will, with some pride. "Smart as a monkey, 'e is . . . always gets the ladies. . . ."

Indeed, the ladies crowded round the child, hugging him to their perfumed bosoms and leaving red marks, like love bites, from their rouged lips; his little hands spilled coins already.

"Good makings there," said Andrea, professionally. "If you care to apprentice him, there's another guinea for you, all found, with the clothes he stands up in."

"I'll take it," said Big Will, promptly. "And no bawling, woman!" He glared at the fat lump beside him, who looked as though nothing could be further from her thoughts.

"She ain't my mam, anyway," said the mite, scornfully. "My mam is dead of the plague, two winters back. I mind when the cart came for her—what a stink!" And he held his nose.

There was a shocked silence; our Savages had come far from this amoral company. One of the ladies clucked her tongue and said, "Did you not love her, then . . . little Beau?"

"Naw," said the boy, sturdily. "She was always drunk . . . when she was at home. Used to pinch me." His blue eyes were hot and

defiant. "He ain't my father neither," and he jerked his thumb at Big Will. "She said so. He beat her for it, but she said so." And he ducked behind the nearest skirt, expecting a blow.

"Here's your guinea, my man!" Then Andrea held out a slim white hand to the cringing child. "Come, Master What's-your-name . . . Beau, is it? And shall we call you Beau Savage? Or do you fear the hanged one's shade?" It was sober talk for a child, but the boy answered cheekily.

"Naw . . . 'e was 'anged by a king anyway. 'Appen I'll be knighted by one!"

And so the deed, the King's grant, and all the papers went back to Drury Lane, along with the newest comedy apprentice. The documents were passed around, exclaimed over, and finally, framed in gold, along with the old drawings they had saved from the first Florentine days, of Thomasine in her boy's tights, a small Bronzini of the Medici ancestor, Giulia, and the famous masks worn through the years by those great Harlequins, Brighellas, and Pantaloons of the famous Italian past.

As for the little Beau, he was scrubbed till his skin glowed red and his fair hair shone, and then set to his lessons—harder than any of Miranda's, for he was starting late. His mouth ached from the pebbles he had to talk through, and his head hurt from the Latin, but he did not complain. For the first time in his life he had silk on his back and honey and treacle on his bread, meat every day and watered wine to wash it down. He slept on feathers and walked on air; with a show to see every night as part of the schooling and all the pretty ladies quarreling over his smiles, he was in paradise.

In the natural way of things, little Beau would have continued in this state for years, studying, laboring, watching, but, by a fluke, it was less than a month before he was rehearsing along with his betters on the stage of Drury Lane. For Garrick had had an inspiration, and his enthusiasm carried all the players along with him.

He planned a great, crowd-catching combination of forces, a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with the Italian comedians and Garrick's own company all playing. It was a natural, for the comedians would take the fairyland roles and the real people would be played by the "straight" actors. Garrick himself would take the comparatively small part of Theseus and direct, Peg Woffington and Miranda would do the two lovelorn Grecian maidens, and so on down the line. Andrea was Bottom, and Tonio was Oberon, king of the Fairies; his Lucia, when she arrived, would be his Titania, with a

song written in especially. There were plenty of fairy roles, Mustardseed and the rest, but for the wonderful boy Puck there was no one so perfect as the new little apprentice, Beau. Most of his lines were given to other people, for his accent was still churlish, but it remained an important part, as it was Puck who was author of all the mischief. The child was worked doubly hard, to bring him up to the mark and, as well, to prevent his head from swelling too insufferably. They need not have worried; it was all one to Beau, the bread and honey, the soft bed, and the applause; it was all a miracle.

Everything conspired with the lovers to keep their romance a secret; the discovery of the new Beau Savage, a kinsman as well; the challenging joint production, now in rehearsal; most of all, perhaps, the wonderful acquisition of the ancestral theater, so long an unlikely dream. Andrea lost no time in contracting builders, masons, and painters; he hoped to have the new-old theater ready for occupancy by the next season, when their contract with Garrick would terminate. He did not have much spare time, for his role as Bottom was taxing (he had not learned a new line in forty years!). Indeed, with all that had happened, it is doubtful that he would have noticed the couple rolling naked on the floor!

His professional eye, however, was still as good as always. It was he who suggested the more drastic cuts in the Puck's lines, unswayed by sentiment for his small protégé; Garrick would have let the cockney pass, deeming it original. "No," said Andrea. "This is your greatest of playwrights . . . he cannot be so maligned by an amateur." But he nodded approval at Tonio's Oberon. "He was born for the part! . . . Though, of course, one must wait for the full effect till he has his Lucia opposite him. . . ."

For Garrick had set Miranda to stand in for the missing Lucia, and once again, in his curious, dispassionate fashion, Andrea, her father, shook his head. "She shows improvement, I grant you that . . . a good sense of clowning in the scenes with Bottom, but too heavy. And the scene with Oberon is striking . . . but," and he shook his head once more, "she makes it a duel of gods. She is more Diana than a fairy queen. Lucia will give it just the right touch—light as air, gossamer. Wait! Lucia is a delight!"

Garrick marveled, for privately he thought Miranda very fine, and well able to double both parts if the opera bride was tardy. But, diplomatic to the core, he asked mildly, "How about her performance as Hermia? I think you must agree I was right . . . she *can* play comedy."

Andrea waved his hand, airily. "Oh, that! Where she is not overshadowed by a true artist, by Tonio—yes, the girl does well enough. You have brought her out. I congratulate you."

Garrick thought about Andrea's words: "not overshadowed by a true artist." He shrugged, mentally. Tonio's Oberon was brilliant, consummately professional, whereas the Lysander, her other partner in the play, a fresh-faced juvenile recruited from the newly defunct Hallam company, was as raw as Miranda herself. Their scenes together had a certain ingenuous charm. In a way, he preferred that to the taut and tenuous battle of wits of the Oberon scene.

It was true, Garrick reflected, that Tonio was brilliant: haughty, mercurial, golden . . . and as brittle as Venetian glass. Garrick was unmoved by Tonio's charm; like most great actors, he was somewhat intuitive.

## *Chapter 5*

Mr. Malone, the youthful Lysander, was as abjectly in love with Miranda as she was with her Tonio. Both companies, the Savages and the Garrick troupe, found it refreshing; they could hardly fail to notice, for his devotion was written all over his face. Miranda, blind to all faces save one, was startled when, on the second day of rehearsal, the young man whispered, "I shall die if you will not marry me, sweet Miranda. . . ."

It was not a day of name-changing for the sake of stage glamour or euphony; though "Michael Malone," the name he had been christened with in Balmoral twenty-two years before, was euphonious enough, Heaven knows. He was fresh, or very nearly, out of Trinity, fleeing, as it were, the pulpit for the boards. The young man had come up to London after his graduation, to see the sights and look around. He looked first at wonderful old Macklin, as Lear, then at wonderful young Garrick, as Hamlet, and lost his heart and wits to the theater. There being at the time no opening at either idol's feet, he wangled a job, with the aid of his patrimony, some fifty pounds, and his open-faced good looks, in the acting company of the decent, old-fashioned, but not so wonderful William Hallam. Hallam's theater



was Goodman's Fields, a great echoing house with bad acoustics and yawning cavities among its blocks of seats. Young Michael had had a scant season of juvenile roles in some of the more insipid farces before Hallam had been forced into bankruptcy. This part of Lysander, in one of Shakespeare's better-known comedies, and with the top-ranking Drury Lane company, exceeded his wildest fantasies. But Garrick had caught the young actor on the last night, a benefit, in perhaps the most innocuous farce of all, *Miss in Her Teens*; the "Miss" was equally innocuous, but Michael's open countenance, merry eye, and rich Celtic voice had impressed the ever alert manager; he had hired the boy on the spot. And here he was, on one of the world's most famous stages, being directed by surely its greatest actor! On top of it all, there had come into his life this dark-eyed angel, this maiden of flame and ice, this Miranda! "My cup runneth over," whispered young Mr. Malone to himself; he knew his Bible, even the Old Testament. Why, the words had almost as fine a roll to them as the rhymed couplets of your best dramas!

He was persistent, but good-natured; as often as he bespoke Miranda's hand, just so often did he smile away her easy refusals, saying, "I can wait, my wonderful girl. You will come around in the end. We are fated, we two. . . ."

And Miranda was flattered, beneath her light and slight contempt; who would not be? This was a most pleasant young man, good to look at and be with, sympathetic to her every mood. Miranda had never had a friend of her own age, girl or boy; she had never shared a confidence, or received one, never laughed for sheer good spirits, or danced for fun, never run hand in hand for joy at being alive. Less and less was she able to maneuver trysts with her lover; more and more did she rely on the second-best attentions of Michael Malone.

The two new friends, between rehearsals, hurried to catch the loveliest sunsets, arm in arm and wide-eyed with wonder; they read Shakespeare's sonnets, and the sterner passions of the churchman John Donne; they pored over the medieval Latin of Abélard's songs, and Michael, who could strum a pretty mandolin, set them to music of his own, which they sang softly far from other ears. They argued, too, happily, about God and kings and court scandals; about the troubles in France and the way a line ought to be read. It never occurred to Miranda to remember that her Tonio was wont to dismiss all of these things with the same shrug and smile.

Michael told her, gravely, about his lack of vocation and the sadness it had brought to his pious mother back in Ireland. "I was



one of four sons, you see, and the others older and gone years ago for soldiers. She—Mother—had vowed a son to the Church when she was a maiden. . . . But she does not blame me. I think, in different times, Mother might have made an actress herself.” And he smiled a little, remembering.

“I never knew my mother,” said Miranda, suddenly. “I think I hated her,” she said, low and fiercely.

“Why?” whispered Michael.

“I don’t know. . . . Because she died and left me, I suppose. A silly reason . . . but I was silly then. And also because she was so beautiful, or so they said . . . my father and the others.”

“You must take after her,” said Michael, fondly.

“Oh, no! She was all fair and golden . . . tiny, too, like an adorable doll. I remember, when I was eight, I came across a pair of her dancing slippers in an old trunk. I could not even get them on my feet!”

“Like Cinderella’s poor sisters,” he said, pressing her hand. “I always felt sorry for them.”

“I, too,” she cried softly, looking surprised. “I always felt for the wrong people in the old tales—the wicked queen whose mirror told the truth—”

“And the maidens who could not feel the pea under the mattress,” he said, nodding.

“And were not true princesses!” She laughed, and he with her. “You know,” she went on, “I always felt like that . . . not a true princess, I mean. Or—” she turned to him, her eyes seeking—“do you know those stories about a child stolen away by the gypsies, and another put in its place? I always felt like that, really. Always like a . . . changeling.”

“I shouldn’t wonder!” He laughed, taking her hand again. “Anyone would, with those rare peacock creatures!”

“Anyone would?” she asked, searching his face. “You mean—” and she began to smile, “all these years, it has been they—the Savages—who are the changelings . . . and I the real-life child?”

“Oh, heavens, yes!” He laughed aloud. “Look how Garrick has cast them . . . as fairies, elves, spirits. Don’t you see? They have been playing those wild comedy parts so long, they *are* those unreal characters off the stage. The little ladies with their tinkling voices, like breaking glass, and their round eyes, and their wasp waists . . . and the men, strutting and gorgeous, with their perfect timing, their

flute voices, their dancers' bodies. They slip on a banana peel and fall like angels! I don't even think they're funny!"

She stared at him. "You know . . . I don't either! But I always thought I must be dim-witted in some way." She frowned. "And the audiences laugh. . . ."

"They laugh at Bottom in his ass's head! They laugh from nerves—surprise—who knows? But an intelligent person . . . ! One admires the art, the craft, the tradition, but . . ." And he threw up his hands expressively.

"I should not let you speak so," she said. "They are my family."

"Maybe not," he said, looking sly. "Maybe the gypsies—"

And they fell to giggling and could not stop.

He broke off, to look at her with a sweet gravity. "Now will you marry me? Look how we agree!"

Her eyes looked into his, seeing his goodness. She smiled, grieving, and shook her head. "Michael, you do not know. . . ."

"What, my darling? What troubles you?"

"Nothing. It is nothing. Let's not speak of it again . . . but I cannot." She turned away; she had nearly told him everything.

"Not today, then, sweet. Perhaps tomorrow," he said, lightly.

The friendship between the two young people had not escaped Tonio's notice. In a strange way, it piqued him; he was tired of the girl, but he did not like to see her favor another. "Tonight," he whispered to Miranda, when they had run through their scene together. "Come to my room tonight. Midnight or after."

Miranda had been waiting for this; for a week and more he had made one excuse after another, and his wife was expected now, any day. Her mouth was dry and her palms wet all through the performance; luckily it was *Antony and Cleopatra* and as Octavia she had little to do, for she could hardly get out the few lines she had to say.

That night Tonio loved her tenderly, and she slept in his arms. At the first lightening gray in the predawn sky, he awakened her.

"Go now, sweetheart; it is time. The last time. . . ."

She stared into the dark at his face, seeing only the dark shape of his head against the window. "The last time?" she whispered.

"Why, yes, my sweet . . . Lucia may be here tomorrow." His voice was quiet and reasonable.

"You mean . . . you will not tell her?"

He laughed a little, softly, and bent to bite her playfully on the nose. "What should I tell her? That I have been sleeping with my little cousin? That she was dear and young and I could not help my-

self? That I am sorry for it and she must forgive?" He laughed again.

Miranda said nothing; it seemed to the man that she did not even breathe. He spoke again.

"Look, my dear . . . it was lovely, but it is over. This is farewell." He brought a fond note into his voice, caressing the words. "Go now, little one . . . I shall never forget you. . . ."

"Nor I you," came the cold dry words. And she was gone.

The next morning, long before the fair Lucia arrived, before the start of her scene with Michael, Miranda, white-faced, caught him by the arm, her fingers biting deep. She said, low but not in a whisper, "You have not asked me yet today."

He smiled. "What have I not . . . ?" And as he stared at her, the blood left his face, like wine draining from a broken glass; freckles stood out brown against the green-white of his skin. "You will marry me?"

She nodded.

## Chapter 6

The thunderclap of that betrothal announcement quite spoiled the pretty Lucia's London reception; the Italian luminary's defection from the opera ought, by rights, to have been on all lips and in every bit of the newsprint, but the young lovers usurped the limelight. Garrick could not care; any publicity was all to the good. "And the lovely Lucia has a shrew's mouth, anyway," he whispered to himself.

The couple planned to marry at the close of the run of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and, wonder of wonders, to embark almost immediately for the New World. It would not be a honeymoon, but an adventure; they were going as members of the first theatrical troupe ever to play in that almost unknown place. In vain did Michael protest that he had not yet signed a contract; Miranda, with tears, begged him to find a place for her as well. Michael's first manager, the now defunct William Hallam, had conceived of the bold idea himself, raised the money for the venture, and persuaded his brother, Lewis, also an actor, to head the company. The out-of-work players from Hallam's theater comprised the greater part, but it was

surprising how many others volunteered, considering that, in most Londoners' eyes, they would face a virtual wilderness. Garrick's face was alight. "I envy you, my dear," he said to Miranda. "It is a country of wonders, by all accounts . . . and you will be our explorers in that wild place, our Argonauts! I myself would be with you, had I the time. . . ." Looking keenly at her face, he added, "And it is not so wild either as all that! You will sail to the colony of Virginia—it is largely settled, with many great houses . . . and some wealth, too. No need to be afraid."

"Oh, I am not . . . I'm not afraid." But Garrick thought she looked less happy than a bride should look; she was pale and he thought she had grown a trifle thinner; excitement, no doubt, he reflected, dismissing it.

Privately, too, he dismissed his own brainchild, the much-vaunted production of the Shakespearean fantasy. They opened to extravagant applause, and to extravagant praise from the printed weeklies later; the theater was sold out clear through the run, but Garrick was disappointed. "It does not catch fire," he said to Lacey; Lacey shrugged and went on counting the money.

He was quite right; the production was beautiful, grand, dazzlingly colorful, and vastly hollow. The Italians would not take direction, and played Shakespeare exactly as they played their own harlequinades and pantomimes; Miranda and Michael were good, but not good enough to carry the play; Peg Woffington was only passable; and he, Garrick, had been too busy with production to develop his own part. Next time, he said to himself, I shall take Bottom, with Woffington as Titania; truth to tell, he would be glad to see the Italians leave for their own theater; he was tired of sharing.

The new Agincourt Field, meanwhile, was shaping up well; it would be a small theater, for there was only so much room in the little courtyard beside the old inn. But that was all to the good; the Italian comedy was very special, after all. Andrea could not forbear to be architect; indeed, one felt that if he had the leisure, he would have rebuilt it with his own hands. It would follow the old traditions of the first *Commedia dell'Arte* stage after it had come in out of the marketplace: high, with a big apron and a deep playing area. They had brought over a scene painter, one Bronzini, descended no doubt from the court painter of the Medici; already the scenery flats blazed with color, and great gaudy decorations were beginning to appear on the walls of the theater itself.

Big Will would stay on, as ostler; he was too disreputable to show



his face in the refurbished inn. His raggle-taggle brother Beau had disappeared, no doubt to avoid a confrontation with the law, taking his half of the purchase price, one of the drunken drabs, and some eight or so of the runny-nosed urchins. Cleaned up, Big Will's woman would do to tend bar; in a decent gown she proved to be not blowsy, but pleasingly plump, and her washed hair was red; they called her Nell, and she swore she, too, was a Savage, many times removed. Andrea could believe it; after all, as he said, we go back three centuries, we players; one might find a Savage anywhere—even in the New World, he added, with a twinkle at Miranda. Yes, she agreed silently, fresh out of debtors' prison. She had not the Savage pride of race; in the new company, in America, she would be billed, respectably, as "Mrs. Malone."

It was a fair exchange; if Miranda was lost to the new Agincourt Field, there were two brand-new Savages to replace her, and one even authentic: little Beau. Obviously, after the success he had made as Puck, his apprenticeship was behind him. If he could not yet speak the King's English, the King and all his retinue had taken him to their hearts; henceforward there would be a Puck-ish character in all the comedies. And the fair Lucia, despite her lack of blood lines, was to the Savage manner born; the ghosts of all the Thomasines and Giuliettas danced in her twinkling toes and silvered her high, sweet voice. She could not act at all (nor, truth to tell, could they), and her accent might be cut with a butterknife, but no matter, her charm spilled like blown blossoms all over the stage and even into the spectators' laps; the people adored her. She took no notice of Miranda at all, except to remark, sagely, that of course Garrick must get rid of her or lose the Woffington. "And, of course, my dears, she is just the thing for America . . . so *sincere*!" Accent or no, she was pure British snob already.

Michael's mother journeyed across the Irish Sea to watch her favorite son take his marriage vows and to bid him a tearful farewell; she was a comfortable round body with rosy cheeks and a look of Michael about the eyes. She saw the last performance, too, and swore that the foreigners, difficult as they were to follow with their queer speech, were "as good as a play!"

"Mother," said Michael, smiling, "the whole thing was a play!"

"Oh, no," she said, shaking her head, "you two were as real as could be! And your little dearie—" she smiled at Miranda—"why, she might be one of our village girls with paint on her face!"



Michael laughed, hugged Miranda, and whispered, "Take it as a compliment!"

Early in the month of May, Michael, Miranda, and the newly assembled troupe of actors, under the management of Lewis Hallam, took ship with Captain Billy Lee, of the brig *Charming Sally*. The voyage, a short one for those days, took six weeks; they arrived in His Majesty's colony of Virginia in late June.

The crossing was mild; the wind blew fair day after day, and no storms at all; after the first week, even the most seasick left their cabins to stagger weakly out onto the softly swaying deck and find their sea legs. With Miranda, though, it did not pass; even on the dry land of Virginia, her stomach still heaved.

Mrs. Hallam, the leading lady and mother of four, looked at the bride's green face with a sharp eye, and nodded wisely. Her words were kind. "The morning sickness . . . it will pass soon. You will have six playing months, at least, before it shows."

Miranda stared. The lady, eight years her elder, tossed her pretty head, laughing a little. "My dear, did you not know, then? You are with child. . . ."

## Chapter 7

The Hallam Company, or, as it was now called, The London Company, was not truly the first theatrical troupe to visit the New World; as early as 1716, the town of Williamsburg, in the colony of Virginia, boasted a building erected solely for the presentation of plays, with a real stage, a curtain, and six hundred seats. It was to this theater that The London Company was bound.

Williamsburg was a thriving community of which its citizens were justly proud. There were a number of mansions in what was beginning to be known as the Greek style, porticoed and colonnaded, upon the winding carriage road, and, farther out, huge, sprawling plantations which grew a fortune in cotton and tobacco. The town proper, Williamsburg's heart, boasted a wondrous variety of businesses, great and small, and some of the streets were paved.

The actors, dizzy and still feeling the deck under them, stood, in

their dusty English finery, and stared, appalled. This Williamsburg was no bigger than the smallest peasant village at home! And hot with a heat that rose steaming from the new cobbles and hung shimmering above the distant, faded fields. Europe never held such heat—wilderness heat. Miranda, hearing all about her the soft, dismayed cries of the women, and seeing the men's grim looks, said, "It's pretty, isn't it? Like a stage village—so clean and neat!" Her nausea had miraculously disappeared, just now, after so many weeks of misery; she felt euphoric. Michael, adoring, kissed her tenderly and said, "Darling! You are better!"

"It's gone—the sickness! I'm hungry!" she cried in surprise.

"I could do with a wash," said Mrs. Hallam. This brought a laugh, for it was assuredly an understatement; the ship's supply of water had steadily declined; they had been hoarding pannikins of it for days.

"There's the inn," said Lewis Hallam decisively. "I had better look over the theater. I'll just settle you in, my dear," he said, with a look at his wife.

The inn was not unlike a country inn anywhere, small and poky, with low ceilings, smoking fireplaces, straw mattresses, and fleas. Except for Miranda, they were all used to such places, and she, being occupied with sterner discomforts, hardly noticed.

The theater, called Livingstone's, was in a dreadful state; it had been shut up for twenty years. The windows were broken, the door sagged on its hinges, and many of the seats were backless, legless, or altogether missing. "The New World has its vandals, too, I see," said the new actor-manager, rubbing his chin.

"Sir," said Michael, eagerly, "it should not be too difficult to repair."

"I shall give it into your charge, then, my boy," answered Lewis Hallam, with a wintry smile. Lewis Hallam was a man already past his prime, if indeed he had ever had one. He had lived always in the shadow of his more famous brother; this would be his first chance at leading roles. He was tall and exceedingly thin, with piercing dark eyes, a lantern jaw, and a tendency to asthma; he wheezed softly now, in the musty, stale air of the disused theater.

Michael jumped onto the stage's curving apron; the boards creaked dangerously. He gave a sharp tug to the rope that held the rolled-up curtain; it came away in his hands, rotted through; the curtain fell heavily, sending out a cloud of dust and a ghostly moth.

Every corner, every cranny told the same tale of neglect and disre-

pair; the dressing-rooms were tiny boxes, without ventilation; the one latrine had no seat and half a door and stood in a field overgrown with weeds, waist-high; there was no running water, no pump, no well. Mr. Hallam allowed himself a heavy sigh. "I cannot think what Mrs. Hallam will say," he said, his long face growing longer. "The place is not fit for pigs, much less ladies."

"They are not ladies," said Michael, gaily. "They are actresses! What lady would voyage half across the world on the wide seas merely to bring the theater to a new audience? You will see, sir, they will not utter a word of blame or discouragement, but roll up their sleeves and make the best of it."

And he was right; the entire company fell to with a good will, sweeping and scrubbing, mending and building. Within a week they were ready to begin rehearsals. They had taken a vote, for the circumstances were so very unusual; it was decided to present for the first play *The Merchant of Venice*, by Mr. William Shakespeare. The part of the Jew, Shylock, was eminently suited to the lank and somewhat sinister aspects of Lewis Hallam's person, and there was a plenitude of roles to introduce the rest of the company. "Besides," said Laura Hallam, who would play Portia, "it cannot offend anyone. I have not seen a single Jew!"

"How can you tell?" asked Michael, inclined to disputation in such matters. Mistress Hallam merely stared, and others shrugged or smiled, as the fancy took them; everybody knew what a Jew looked like!

Indeed, it seemed so; the audiences took amiably enough to Lewis Hallam's grotesque, greasy, disheveled Shylock with his huge nose and thick comedy accent; they laughed at him, hissed, booed, and applauded his downfall. Miranda and Michael were privately aghast; such a Shylock had not been seen in London since the turn of the century, and just last year Garrick had humanized the part, playing him as a soft-spoken, well-dressed man of high religious principles.

"But then, what can you expect?" asked Michael. "This is a slave society, after all!" And his blue eyes flashed dangerously.

Miranda elbowed him hard and said in a low voice, smiling, "Darling . . . your Irish is showing!" Her brief time with Michael had uncovered in her a fugitive, mordant wit. He smiled back at her, and whispered, "It's true, all the same, and you know it! They make me uncomfortable."

He was alone in these reservations; the entire company was having

the time of its collective life; these half-gypsy actors, tolerated at home with, at best, a sort of good-natured contempt, were here dined, feted, received everywhere. The wealthy, idle, easy-going planters, starved for a breath of the sophisticated Old World, took the troupe of players to their bosoms and hearts; hardly a week went by that did not have its "collation" after the play in some gracious drawing-room, or its Sunday barbecue on some vast, manicured lawn, and all in honor of the wonderful, exotic birds of paradise, the actors from London. The gentlemen, proffering their finest cigars and their oldest port, swapped tales of the London clubs, though most of them, host and guest alike, had never been inside one; the ladies begged for gossip of the court, and patterns of the latest dressmaker styles.

It was pleasant, after sweating through a vigorous performance in the incredibly stuffy theater, to gather in the long, low, candlelit rooms, under huge, slow ceiling fans that created a delicious cool breeze, and eat the bright pink, icy flesh of the strange watermelon fruit, and sip light white wine from thin crystal goblets while the slow, sweet, drawling voices rose and fell, always in delightful compliment. It was pleasant, too, to dress in the lightest, airiest clothes and sit on cushions, under canopies, waited on hand and foot, smelling the wonderful odors of roasting pork, fowl, spices, and herbs; to eat huge meals off gleaming white linen cloths spread under the leafy roofs of the flowering trees; to taste the wonders of this new land: the crisp, white, young corn, served on the cob, with silver handles to hold it by; the golden yams, swimming in yellow butter; the thick slices of succulent pink ham; the great pies, filled with fruit and flaky-crusted; the sweet, strong liqueurs flavored with mint. And, filled to bursting, with heads dizzy from the strong spirits, to lie down in cool, darkened rooms on great beds, lavender-scented, and rest.

The one thing, disquieting, that they could not get used to, was the silent presence of dozens of black faces; deft, competent, black hands; soft-spoken rich voices, alien and dark. It was the great solid presence upon which this indolent society moved and lived. Most of the players had never seen a Negro servant; indeed, they were unused to servants of any kind. They had no idea how to behave toward the blacks who waited on them, and alternated uncomfortably between haughty indifference and overfamiliarity. "We are not to tip them," whispered Miranda. "I asked!"

For they were everywhere, the blacks; even outside the great plantations, slave labor was prevalent in this Virginia colony. The servants



at the inn, the hired hack drivers, the waterfront workers, even the doorkeepers and handymen employed at the theater were blacks. It was by far the cheapest labor, for a master would hire out his slave for much less than his white indentured servant, though the life of such a person was not much better than a slave's life.

Boatloads of the bound servants, men and women, and often small children, arrived every week; mostly they were debtors and their families, but sometimes they were convicted felons, condemned to this bondage as punishment; Michael called it a cheap revenue for the Crown. One virtually never saw a freedman, black or white, for such folk invariably went north, to the more liberal colonies of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. An indentured servant in Virginia, once his time of indenture had been worked off, had no future, except to bind himself in further servitude, for competition from slave labor prohibited free enterprise.

Whatever their unease, the members of the company soon threw it off, for there was much pleasantness here, in this lenient, affluent society. Most of the wealthy planters adored the theater, and prided themselves on their knowledge of Shakespeare; the company did not have to resort to the common farces of its repertory, and played all its best bills to great acclaim. Few of the audience had any degree of discernment, however; they applauded as enthusiastically for Lewis Hallam's ranting, Mrs. Hallam's mannered artificiality, and the wooden good looks of the second actor, David Douglas, as they did for Miranda's and Michael's youth and naturalness.

Miranda played, literally, up until the birth of her son, for he came early; a result, the midwife said, of a jolting in a badly sprung coach over roads rutted with icy mud.

He was born in the unseasonable cold of a November night, after a short but difficult labor; they called him Timothy. He was small but beautiful, the image of Miranda, and with nothing of his father at all.

Michael bent over the mother and child. "He has your hair—so dark and thick," he said, fondly.

"But your eyes!" whispered Miranda, hastily. "See—they're blue!"

The midwife snorted. "All newborns have blue eyes . . . they'll change later. Most like the hair'll fall out, too . . . could come in any color at all!"

The milky baby eyes focused and darkened, but the hair stayed—strong, thick, and nearly black. Little Timothy grew sturdier and stronger by the day; his premature birth was soon forgotten. They

declared, all the company, who doted on this first child born in the New World, that he would be tall and handsome, like his parents. He was a pretty, forward child, and not too spoiled by attention.

Though his childhood was spent in many different places, it was all one to him; theaters everywhere look much alike. The echoing boards of the empty stage, the rows and rows of folded seats were his playground; stage props, blunt daggers, crowns, and scepters were his toys.

By the time he was five, he had lived in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and the island of Jamaica. By the time he was fifteen, his mother and father were the famous Malones, with a company of their own and a theater bearing their name, on Nassau Street in the city of New York.

Miranda's father had died in London, at the peak of his fame, leaving the bulk of his fortune to his daughter; the Malones were now reasonably rich, as well as famous; they owned, as well, a share of the family theater in London, that now-thriving Agincourt Field Theatre, and a small villa in Fiesole, outside Florence.

Timothy, at fifteen, was handsome, clever, and accomplished. He knew all the young lovers in Shakespeare by heart, and had played a few of them, too, in a pinch. He sang well, danced better, and showed a natural aptitude for fencing. "He will be wonderful in romantic parts," said Michael, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"Perhaps he will not be an actor at all," said Miranda, wistfully. "We are all such gypsies . . . and so ignorant. I wish—" She felt Michael's shocked eyes upon her and broke off. "Well, at least he will see something of the world . . ."

For Timothy was going to Oxford University, in England, in the fall.

## *Chapter 8*

It was spring, 1770. The theater was closed again, the third time this year, after rioting in the streets; Michael had gone down early in the morning to placate irate customers and return ticket money; Miranda, shivering a little in the too fresh breeze, took her letter from the

post. It was from Timothy, no doubt; a packet boat had just docked.

She smiled up at the uniformed soldier who made the rounds on horseback; his nose, from the cold, was almost as red as his coat; "Lobster-backs," the New York citizenry called them, the British soldiers who kept the peace. This one was young, no more than Timothy's age, if that, and fresh out of some North Country hamlet, from his broad speech.

"Is there trouble already this morning?" she asked, pulling her shawl closer. "I thought I heard shooting."

"Just the Sons of Liberty again, Mum . . . we shot over their heads, is all."

"Oh, I see . . . nothing much, then. That's good." She nodded to him and shut the door. She had not even noted his look of admiration; she was used to such looks. Miranda was thirty-seven, handsome, deep-bosomed, and tall. She had lost the fragile, vulnerable air of her youth, and gained a flashing-eyed, mettlesome presence; her profile was that of a warrior queen on an antique coin; she was unsurpassed in tragic parts. Although men admired her face and figure, it was to the women of her audiences that she most appealed; their tears, wept night after night, would have filled rain barrels.

She took the letter to the window; a little impatient spasm crossed her face as she threw back the heavy velvet draperies. This Murray Street house, rented, was gloomy—not enough windows and those small and low-set, under jutting eaves. They could afford to buy, but the neighborhood was becoming chancy; three taverns barely a stone's throw away, and one of them, Montagne's, on Broadway, a haunt of the notorious Sons of Liberty; just last month they had burned King George III in effigy, the flames spreading to two house roofs and endangering folk sleeping peacefully in their beds. The King's men had put out the fires and routed the rioters, but charred bits still lay in the street, along with the chopped-up pieces of the Liberty Pole that had served as a rallying point. Miranda had no clear idea of what the troubles were about; something to do with rights and taxes; for years now there had been bad blood between the Mother Country and her colonies. Of late it had grown worse, small mobs gathering to growl and curse at every proclamation, and student orators haranguing at the odd streetcorner. Michael said there was much right on their side, that Parliament and the King were oppressive, but even he would not countenance the wanton destruction and disorders that followed in the wake of the malcontents. "But it will pass, my dear. Parliament will put things right. These things

take time." Meanwhile the theater was closed one week out of every four, on an average; it was cutting into their income. She sighed, and broke the letter's seal.

This was the fourth letter they had received from London. Timothy had grown bored with Oxford after two years; he had gone up to London the past fall, along with a young friend, a fellow American, from Boston, and now it seemed nothing could pry them away from the city's lures. Not least of these joys were the London theaters, in particular the little Agincourt Field, with its family ties. All Timothy's letters were full of it, and its plays, and its people. This one was no exception, every other name a Savage!

She scanned the page quickly, smiling; he wrote a sprawling, careless hand, but legible. But who was Lucy Ann? She did not recognize the name. The next line stopped her; she drew breath sharply, put her hand to her heart, and sank down slowly onto a chair. She read the words carefully now; it was as though each one seared her eyes.

". . . I have not written of her before, Mother, as I waited to be sure of her heart. I am sure now, Mother. We are to be married in May, when the season there is over, and I will bring her home with me. I know you will love her too, as I do. . . ."

Miranda, sick and hollow, cast her eyes back on the beginning of the page, reading the words over and over. ". . . Lucy Ann, they call her, after her mother, Lucia. She is so pretty . . . and a good actress, too. Like you, Mother, only different. And, like yours, her father is the star of the company, the famous Tonio Savage. . . ."

"Oh, God, my God," went a voice in Miranda's ear; she did not recognize it for her own. Over and over she read the words, till her eyes weakened and blurred. She rose, in a blind panic, blundering into her chair as she turned, and striking her knee, bringing tears. "I must go. I must sail with the packet boat. When . . . ? Oh, God, let it not have sailed. Let it not, God!" She did not even know she spoke, but kept on, crazily, moving between door and stair in her confusion.

She opened the door, stared in the direction of the wharf, shut the door again, heavily, on her hand, crying out softly. The pain brought her senses back; after a moment she went to the fireplace and, tearing the letter across twice, dropped it into the flames.

She watched it as it burned, an instant, and saw the ashes join the others below the thick red log; her face was very still. She turned and mounted the stairs.

When Michael came home at midday, she had nearly finished



packing the small, square trunk; the bedroom curtains were thrown back carelessly, and the noon light washed brightly over the heaps of rejected garments and spilled scarves and gloves. Michael stopped in the doorway and stared. Miranda, on her knees in front of the trunk, heard him and turned a still white face. "Come, darling, help me to close the lid. I can't seem to get the clasp to catch."

"But what—"

"Help me first. I'll explain."

He obeyed, looking at her curiously. When the latch was secure, he took her by the shoulders, turning her to face him. "Now, Miranda, what is it? You look feverish. Is something wrong?"

"I must go to London. Timothy is ill." Her voice was low and even, if a little breathless. Michael's trained ear heard the strain beneath. "Easy, darling," he said. "Tell me."

"A letter came this morning from . . . from that young man, the one from Boston. Lawrence, is that his name? . . . He says that Timothy is ill and asking for me . . . a fever perhaps—I don't know. He does not say . . ."

"Where is the letter?" said Michael, holding out his hand.

She stared as blankly as a dreamwalker. "Where? Oh . . . I was distraught—I lost it. . . . I must have dropped it in the fire. But, oh . . . I remember it all. I remember it well. He—Lawrence—wrote from London—they are in lodgings there. . . . Timothy is asking for me!"

"Do you remember the address?"

"I can reach him through the theater . . . the Agincourt."

"Oh, then they are seeing to him . . . some of your relatives." Michael was insistent; he felt vaguely uneasy. She had never spoken lies to him before, in all their time together; though he did not suspect her words, yet some intuition told him something somehow was wrong. "Has a doctor seen him?"

"Oh, assuredly. It is a fever—a chill on his chest. . . . I am not sure, I told you. But the letter was urgent. I must go . . . by the first boat!"

And so she did, for Michael, too, loved Timothy, and feared for him. He could not, himself, leave—someone must see to the theater business. But, as Miranda pointed out, young Miss Allerton could take all her parts while she was absent. "Except, perhaps, Lady Macbeth . . . she will be too young for it," said Miranda.

She sailed with the tide, on the packet boat which had brought

the distressing letter; the passage would take, if they were lucky with the winds, six weeks; there would just be time. Miranda, at the rail, wrung her hands and faced toward England.

## Chapter 9

There had never been a wedding before, in the Agincourt Field Theatre; for that matter, who ever heard of a wedding held in a theater? But what a grand idea! All London—or at least all fashionable London—would have paid a good price for seats. It was rather a shame that the young couple refused to countenance a big ceremony. Only the family were to be present, and one or two close friends, like the great actor, Garrick. Though it had been impossible to bar the door to the reporter from *The Clarion*, who had promised a glowing account and had brought, as well, a "lightning delineator" to sketch the proceedings. "Oh, please, Timothy," begged Lucy Ann. "It will make Mother so happy!" Lucy Ann was as adorable and charming as her mother, Lucia, had been at the same age; Timothy could refuse her nothing.

Lucy Ann was wearing the beautiful gown that her mother had worn twenty years before in the opera *The Bride of Verona*; it was cream satin embroidered in gold, with a veil of gold tissue that was only a little brighter than her hair. Timothy could not take his eyes off her; she was as lovely as an angel, and truly did not need the paint on her cheeks and lips. Lucy Ann, though, like all these London players, went highly rouged always, onstage and off; he wondered, feeling unloyal, if she wore it to bed as well! For, to his chagrin, he did not know; Lucy Ann had permitted him kisses only, and a few fumbblings, strictly above the waist. Sweet child, she might have been bred in a convent, instead of a theater!

There had been some talk of holding the ceremony on the stage itself, but the young curate who would read the marriage lines had looked so scandalized that they had thought better of it. It had been difficult enough to get a minister; the Church of England did not look kindly on player folk; they might very well have had to make do with a priest! Not that it mattered; they none of them ever went

to church. But a Catholic ceremony would have looked so foreign! Timothy smiled, remembering Mother Lucia's liquid vowels, and the quick Tuscan speech that boiled over in moments of stress. Well, if his darling wanted to be thought English through and through, let her! Their children, at any rate, would be American!

The Actors' Room, now called the "Green Room," for the restful green of its painted walls, would do very well for the wedding. It was the place where the actors gathered to read over scenes, greet admirers, and conduct business; it was large and well lit, not too cluttered with furniture. After, there would be a reception on the stage; the wine was cooling in great buckets, and a long table was set up, with good things to eat, and a great decorated cake in the shape of a heart.

The curate looked even younger than the two young creatures who stood up before him; the ladies of the troupe, always sentimental, clucked their tongues and dabbed handkerchiefs to their eyes at the sight, and Mother Lucia, stuffed into blue satin for the occasion, tottered on her plump little feet and stifled a sob.

The young curate cleared his throat and began; it was the first time he had married anyone; he had been practicing all morning. Now his voice came out clearly, if a little high and thin; he hoped no one would notice his blushes; why did not God take away this curse? He went on bravely, even though someone at the door was making a commotion, and heads were turning. Actors! His bishop had warned him; he sighed inwardly, raising his voice a little.

Even so, his words were lost; when he came to the admonition, he had to begin again. ". . . if anyone knows of a reason why this couple should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, let him speak now or forever hold his peace!"

A voice from the back sounded then, like an organ. Or no, like some deep-throated clarion bell. "Stop! I say to stop! It cannot be!"

There were stirs and bustlings; a buzz of voices rose and fell. "Let me through, I beg you!" cried the golden voice; a woman's, he realized now. "Good people, I implore you—make way!" There was no pleading in it; it was imperious, and could no longer be ignored. The young curate raised his eyes. He saw a tall, straight-backed figure in violet bombazine, a traveling costume; the crowd parted for her, with thunderstruck looks. A noble face swam out at him from among the others, larger than life; beautiful it was, surely, but white, so white, with huge dark eyes.

"This marriage cannot be! It cannot be!"

The bridegroom turned a shocked face. "Mother!"

The dark eyes met her son's briefly; she shook her head, a sad little movement. The curate felt her gloved hand, light on his arm. She whispered hoarsely, "They cannot marry . . . she is his half-sister!"

As low as she spoke the words, the bridegroom heard, and stepped forward quickly. "Mother . . . what . . . ? Mother!"

They stood, mother and son, staring at one another for a long moment; the room was silent suddenly. Into the hush she spoke again, very low. "Yes . . . you have the same father." And then she swayed and seemed to crumple, falling in a heap of violet cloth at the curate's feet.

It was a scene far too unreal for any stage; stark, heavy, and a little ridiculous. Garrick, the first to raise Miranda from the floor and call for brandy, thought dimly how far more outrageous was life than fantasy. He saw quickly that she had merely swooned, from strain and, as it happened, fatigue as well. For she had slept little on the voyage, and had not even got her land legs back. She sipped the brandy he held and raised her eyes to his. "Davy!" She smiled a tiny smile. "I can call you that now . . . Davy. Now that I am old. . . ."

It looked, Garrick thought, like one of those new circus performances, several things happening at once, and the eye bewildered. One group clustered round Miranda, still on the floor, he and his partner, Lacey, among them. The bride was in tears in the arms of the blushing curate, while a few paces away Lucia, not to be outdone, had herself swooned. She was held upright between her husband, Tonio, and the hapless groom, his newfound son; they staggered a little under her weight, for she had grown very fat. Among the numb-faced guests, the "lightning delineator" sketched busily, his fingers flying across his drawing-board. "After him, Charles!" hissed Garrick to his partner. Alas, it was a stage whisper, as might be expected; the artist heard, and vanished quickly with his sketch; the elated newshound, too, had melted into the crowd. The story was all over London by nightfall, twisted and garbled by word of mouth. But *The Clarion* had the full report, complete with pictures, by the end of the week; the scandal rocked the city, and at the Agincourt Field there was "Standing Room Only" for a month.

As for the principals, the erstwhile wedding couple never met face to face again; it was as though each feared contamination by the other. The situation, of course, had no precedent, and who could blame them? Lucy Ann, resilient, wore her bridal gown in a revival of the opera, adapted for a harlequinade; it turned out to be her



greatest success, and indeed her last, for she caught the eye of a baronet and retired from the stage with an annuity of thirty thousand pounds. Her mother, Lucia, not so resilient, took to her bed in a state of profound shock, which did not abate until Tonio had made over his full share of the company in her name. To the day of her death she controlled the company and its purse strings; the younger Savages called her—behind her back, of course—the Old Lady.

The troupe of the *Commedia dell' Arte* had changed greatly over these last years since Miranda had found her fortune in the colonies; they had become, to the last lisping babe, more English than the King's own self, though the speech of the older folk, in moments of strain, still had the frenzied staccato of Italy. Lucia had a Saxon look, dumpling or sausage; Tonio, bald as an egg, had grown, inexplicably, a longer upper lip, covered, for compensation, with a luxuriant mustache. He had taken over the Harlequins after Andrea's death; for the part, he charcoaled the mustache and wore a black stocking cap. Lucia still played, on occasion, and very arch and dainty she was a Bawd, stepping out of character to sing, before the curtain, one of her old operatic arias; her voice quavered only so slightly, and the audiences were good-natured, applauding and calling for more. The plays, once so Italian, were a British institution now; visitors were always taken to the Agincourt Field. "You cannot go home without seeing our Agincourt players . . . they are the heart of Old England!"

The little Beau of the slums had grown into a gorgeous highnosed fop with a languid society drawl. He wore skin-tight satins and frothy lace and had started the fashion for gold-powdered hair; even his pet monkey wore a curled and gilded wig, miniscule and perfect. He had trained the little beast to mimic his every move; it was whispered that he took it everywhere, even into royal beds!

Beau had played everything in the comedy, or nearly: Neddo, Brighella, and a wonderful, pompous Captain; he had even done one season under Garrick at Drury Lane in the clowns of Shakespeare. He was brilliant in them all, so brilliant that he wearied of it; he hired a theater and company of his own, furnished by some unknown patron or patroness, and put on three seasons of extravagantly mounted skits and musical sketches; they were the talk of the town while they lasted, each bill more outrageous than the last, until he flouted convention once too often, shocking even this peculiarly depraved court; his theater had been closed, his cast of players disbanded, and he himself fined stiffly and forbidden to play in London for a twelve-

month. Behind the perfect painted mask of his face, one ice-blue eye winked at Miranda, who had come to see his last performance; he shrugged, beautifully.

"I cannot care!" he said, airily. "The first Beau was hanged for less! Do you not agree—we live in an enlightened age?" He bent to kiss Miranda's hand, leaving a smear of rouge. "And now—what good luck! I am at liberty! Perhaps I shall travel back to the colonies with you! How will that be? Will you have me?"

She hesitated only the fraction of a second, but he caught it. "Never fear, Milady Tragedy," he drawled. "Your secret is safe with me . . . I have always known it anyway," he finished with a small smile.

Her eyes widened. "My dear," said Beau, "you cannot be raised in a sty without rooting out the garbage! If you will forgive the expression! I saw it all that first day, when I was nine or thereabouts. Love-lorn maiden, only a little sullied—preening cad—honest young lover, green as Irish grass. Wife comes back, maiden flees with honest young lover into the wilderness. . . ."

"I do not think it funny," said Miranda, stiffly.

"No, of course you do not, my dear. How could you? I am entirely sympathetic, I assure you . . . but I advise you to put it out of your mind. It is all water under the bridge . . . and very old water, at that. And, my dear, you played the scene beautifully . . . none better!"

She laughed then, in spite of herself; Beau was so much a Savage!

"Yes—come with us," she said, suddenly. "America needs to laugh. We all take ourselves too seriously."

His eyes looked keen and stabbing, the mocking light all gone. "I have a fancy to forget my comedy beginnings," he said. "Will you give me a try at *Hamlet*?"

She looked at him hard. "Can it be you mean it? I can never tell . . ."

"Yes, I mean it. Here, I could not be accepted. They laugh before I open my mouth. But who knows? In New York, perhaps . . ."

"I shall tell you what Garrick told me when first I left the comedy," said Miranda. "We do not run before we can walk."

"But if I come, you will find something for me? I do not truly relish this enforced liberty . . . though I pretend passing well, as the poet says."

"Mercutio, perhaps," she mused, her head on one side, the professional once again. "We will welcome you, never fear. New York does

not have so many good actors as all that." She smiled a little. "But on one condition!"

"Anything, milady dear." He bowed, hand over his heart.

"That you do not bring the monkey!"

"Agreed! I shall sacrifice him, in dead of night. One last Black Mass . . ."

She looked horrified; he laughed, a hearty sound she had not heard before from this strange being. "It was a grisly jest . . . forgive me. I shall give him to the zoo, agreed? I will do more. I will even wear your plain Quaker gray."

She laughed. "We are not Quakers in New York. You may keep your satins and laces. All the Tories wear them—and New York is mostly Tory."

And so another Savage set sail for the New World.

## Chapter 10

They stood at the ship's rail, looking at the small town, wedged between two rivers, that was the city of New York. They had grown very companionable on the voyage, Beau and Miranda; there were barely ten years between them, and Beau's worldliness narrowed the gap as well. And then Timothy had had his friend Lawrence Durham; Miranda had hardly spoken three words to her son in five weeks, since they had set sail. It was not to be wondered at, she thought, in the circumstances—for what was there to say of such a shameful and ludicrous matter? "Poor Timothy," she thought. "And, oh God, poor Michael—my poor husband." Miranda, for an actress, was singularly selfless; it never occurred to her to pity her own plight. And now the two boys had left the ship at Boston, where Lawrence's family had a great house that could be seen from the port. It was good of them to invite Timothy for a whole summer, to be sure; yet Miranda, vaguely uneasy, sighed.

"A penny for them, sweet coz," sounded Beau's light, mocking voice.

"I was thinking of Timothy . . . getting off the boat that way."

"As though his heels had sprouted wings? Ah, yes . . . Well, that

young man has an instinct for survival, like most young people. And what would you have him do, my pretty? Face the music? It was not of his making, anyway. No . . . best thing in the world for him—new place, new faces. And very lovely ones, too! Three provincial maids all in a row.” His smile was thin and bright.

“Lawrence’s sisters? Yes, I suppose they are very pretty.” Miranda was unused to “nice” young girls, having known only stage prodigies, lively and mannered. These three Boston sisters looked bewilderingly alike to her, like fresh white sheets of paper that had not been written on. She remembered them dimly: slight figures in pastel colors, with flowing brown hair under unfashionable bonnets. Her hand went up to the new wide straw hat she wore, a style made popular by the young French Queen, Marie Antoinette; it was crossing the ocean for the first time, most probably, on Miranda’s head.

“And very fetching it looks, too, my dear,” said Beau, with a certain malice. He had a disconcerting way of reading one’s thoughts, even the most unconscious ones. “Do I detect a slight whiff of future mother-in-law?” he asked slyly.

“Of course not!” she began, hotly. “How can you—” She caught his deepening smile and flushed, laughing a little.

“As a matter of fact, it’s probably true,” she said, thoughtfully. “One must guard against these petty jealousies . . . especially with an only son. . . .”

“Oh, my dear, you are so delightfully serious always. It was the merest jest, I assure you. Do not take it to heart! Quite honestly, though, there is a smell of something—from shore, I think. Not unpleasant, but I cannot identify it.”

“It’s cedar smoke,” said Miranda, happily. “New York always smells of it. We all burn cedar logs. . . . We are coming into port.”

“It looks so very small—after London,” said Beau.

And so it did; however one looked at it, the island of Manhattan was tiny, and the bodies of water which bounded it were wide.

“Boston and Philadelphia are larger,” said Miranda. “Still, we are some twenty thousand here, crammed together. There is always talk of filling in the shoreline, and some of the ponds and streams, but so far nothing has been done. Folk keep moving out, across the sound into Long Island, and farther up as well.”

“Why are we going this way?” asked Beau. “The left river is much more attractive.”

“Oh, the Hudson is far too rocky for vessels to dock! See . . . all the great families have built their mansions there, along the shore,



away from the noise and smells of the shipping." She pointed to the huge estates that began on the west side of the Broad Way and extended all the way down to the shore, in orchards and fields. "There is the Van Cortlandt house, and next door the Livingston manor." A wistful note came into her voice. "I wish we might build a house there, on the west side, but it is too far from the theater . . . and then the times are very unsettled. Any little disturbance, and the theaters are closed, sometimes for weeks at a time."

"Oh, well, in London, too. Especially in the summer, when there is a chance of the plague spreading." Beau turned to Miranda. "I heard there is not much danger of it here."

"Not as much, no. We have a few cases, but mainly in the poor quarters, and it does not spread. There is a good deal of the malarial fever, though, from the swamps. As I said, they only talk of filling them in."

The ship gave a sudden lurch, throwing Miranda against the visitor. She clutched at his arm, laughing. "I should have warned you! Docking here is not easy. So often I have watched from the shore. Sometimes it takes more than an hour to get into the proper place. They scrape a little paint off, and that is all. The captains are all used to it."

"A good thing," said Beau. "It looks to take some skill. There is so much shipping, and all in one spot, it seems."

The wharves here at the East River were so crowded, indeed, that it did not look possible to fit all the ships in. Their own vessel rocked and pitched, with a great creaking sound as though the seams were bursting. It scraped hulls twice with its lefthand neighbor and three times with its right, before it inched its way, shuddering, into the narrow slip allotted to it. The air here at waterside was full of the strange smells from other worlds: spices and rum from the Sugar Islands, Madeira from the Spanish Main, aromatic woods from the Honduras, limes and mahogany from Nicaragua, tea and nutmegs from the Dutch East Indies. A wealth of other commerce was here, too—trade goods from France, Holland, and from England itself. Not all of it was imported in accordance with British trade regulations, either; many of those great families who luxuriated on the banks of the Hudson had acquired their fortunes by discreet smuggling.

"That spire," said Beau, gesturing. "It looks like a church."

"And so it is," said Miranda, smiling up at him. "Do you think we are barbarians here? Trinity Church it is, and respectably Anglican

. . . although not many houses of worship can boast they have been erected with the help of Captain Kidd!"

"Truly? How so?"

"So the legend goes, at any rate. He is said to have lent a hoist to move the limestone blocks and make the walls. It is said also that the same pirate captain buried a treasure somewhere near. There is an ordinance forbidding the digging up of the streets."

He laughed. "I shouldn't wonder." He leaned forward, over the rail, scanning the faces that lined the wharf. "Everybody and his sister is out to greet us. Can you see your Michael?"

"Not yet. The crowd is so thick. And then, of course, he does not know we are on this boat."

"I am sure he has met every one this week," said Beau. "If his heart has not changed over the years . . ." He looked sidewise at her, a long look.

"He had not . . . when I left. Now—well, I cannot tell. It will be a shock."

"You mean to tell him, then?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I must."

"It is quite likely he would never hear of it . . . or do you get the newspapers from London?"

"We do not . . . but some others must. They are no doubt traveling with us, pictures and all." She made a wry little face and shrugged sadly. "No . . . he must hear it first from me. I do not relish the telling."

"I would swear on the Bible that the whole thing was a rank piece of libel. . . . No?"

"No." She smiled a little and shook her head.

He wagged his finger at her. "It would be so easy. You are not behaving like a Savage, my dear!"

"I never did," she said grimly, flashing him a dark look.

The boat gave a final lurch and a great solid bump that flung them hard against the rail. "We are in!" cried Beau. "They are putting out the gangplank."

"There he is! There is Michael," said Miranda, waving.

"Odd," murmured Beau. "He is exactly as I remembered him."

"Yes," said Miranda, smiling. "He hates it, for it keeps him in juvenile parts. Even with gray painted in his hair, and a beard, he cannot disguise his look of youth. I fear that before long I shall have to play mothers opposite him, and not sweethearts."

"Oh, come now, my dear, one can hardly call you elderly," began Beau.

"No—but seriously, it is a worry. Michael cannot play the Macbeths or the Othellos—and those plays are best for me. We are always seeking for leading men, and, alas, they are few and far between."

They had been making their way toward the passengers' exit, a narrow platform of planks which swayed over the dark water between ship and shore. Ladies were squealing prettily and pretending to feel faint. Miranda turned an impatient face. "Can we not push ahead?"

"Ah, yes," murmured Beau into her ear. "I forgot . . . you only swoon at weddings."

She gave him a dark look and swept past him, to skim lightly over the precarious makeshift bridge. "Michael, my darling!"

Beau sauntered over in his turn, finding his way to the embracing couple. "Michael," said Miranda, "do you remember little Beau?"

Michael, middling tall, had to raise his eyes a little to meet Beau's; they crinkled in amusement. "I must say I would not have known you . . . though I remember Puck well enough."

Close to, Beau saw that Michael's fine eyes had a permanent crinkle, and that there was a deep groove, not unattractive, beside his mouth. But the contours of his face were still unblurred and his carriage was straight and lively.

"I, on the contrary, would have recognized you anywhere," said Beau. "I was remarking as much to your lady just now. You have found the Fountain of Youth, it seems. I have heard it is here somewhere, in the New World."

Michael made a grim little face. "You mean it kindly, I know, but I have always felt only the insane . . . or the unintelligent remain the same as the years pass."

"Not so," said Miranda, shaking her head. "It is not so, for I saw Garrick in London, and he, too, is exactly as he was when we left!"

"Ah," said Michael, "but the great Garrick had reached his mature self—even then, he had a look of greatness." He laughed and shrugged. "We cannot all be Garricks, much as we would wish it. I fear it is a matter of something more than youth. I have not the heroic quality . . . and we are mismatched for the stage, my dear, for, of course, you have!" He looked at Beau, measuring. "Perhaps . . . have we a Hamlet here?"

Beau flashed a look at Miranda, his mouth twitching. "So I have told the fair Miranda, but she would not have it."

"Michael is more discerning than I," she said, studying him. "I cannot see beneath the frumpery manner. . . ."

"Is that what you call it, my dear? I am cut to the quick!" Beau bowed, with his hand over his heart, his painted lips turning down at the corners like a Pierrot's.

"It is a manner meant to deceive," thought Michael, though his eye winced from the flamboyant spectacle that Beau presented. He knew, from hearsay, that the powder, paint, and patches, the languid air, the mincing tones were the height of London fashion, but they had not yet reached these shores. Already, folk were staring, and he had caught a snigger or two. "It is early morning still," he thought, "and perhaps none of the Sons of Liberty are astir; otherwise we shall all be tarred and feathered!" A moment later he cursed his mobile face, silently, for he saw that Beau had a strangely aware look.

Beau said, as if upon a careless thought, "When in Rome, one must do as the Romans do. Perhaps I shall wash my face!"

He was as good as his word; he appeared at supper with a pale cheek shiny from soap, and his own hair brushed smoothly back and tied into a queue at his nape. He wore black velvet, breeches and coat, and his linen was fine but plain. He smiled, looking at them both as they stared. "I am rubbing my point home," he said. "If I owned doublet and hose, I would wear them as well. And I assure you, I know all the lines! Will you hear me later?"

"Hamlet!" cried Miranda. "You are dressing the part!"

"Assuredly," said Beau. "I am above nothing. I would have dyed my hair Danish fair, if it were not yellow already."

And, indeed, so insistent was he that they must read him that very night, to judge of his interpretation. It was a strange one, too, so light and thrown away, so like a gentleman student discoursing in his rooms to one of like mind, or even, as Miranda said, as if Hamlet talked to himself!

"And so, in a way, he does, you know," said Michael, thoughtfully, when they were alone and talking of it. "It has not been read in quite that manner . . . but perhaps it would be effective. . . ."

Miranda shook her head. "It is the comedian's way," she said. "There is no nobility, no—" she searched for the word—"no soul!"

For Beau was far ahead of his times, though they did not know it. Even the much praised "naturalness" of David Garrick had a crispness and a style sharper than life, and Miranda, surely one of



the truest dramatic actresses of her day, was true to a manner of goddess life, not the sadly mortal frailty of humankind. No, not yet, not for a century or more would there be the thrown-away line, the muttered, half-heard phrase, the eloquent back, the impotent shrug.

"I think," said Michael, slowly, rubbing his chin, "that perhaps Beau's delivery might work—might, mind you—for Mercutio."

"That is just what I said!" cried Miranda, triumphant. "In London he spoke of it to me. I could not see him as Hamlet, however famous London finds him. But Mercutio, I said. I said it then!"

"Two minds with but a single thought," mused Michael. "Or two hearts, perhaps, that beat as one." He gazed deeply into her countenance. A loving look, but something else as well. There was a little silence while their eyes held.

Being who they were—and what, being players first—they must first deal with the important matter of Beau's playing or not playing Hamlet; the matter that was urgent enough to take her half across the world had not been spoken of till now.

"You have not asked me," said Miranda, halting, "of Timothy."

"No," said Michael. "I guessed he did not want to come home."

"It is not that," said Miranda, and the slow, painful tide of dark blood crept up into her thin cheeks. "I did not know how to speak of it—how to tell—"

"I know," said Michael. "We get the newspapers late, from London. But still they were ahead of you."

She stared at him, not speaking; then she put her head into her hands and wept, not the easy tears of the theater, but the aching, hard-wrung, ugly tears that are born of shabbiness and shame. It hurt his heart to see her, so unlike his own Miranda, and he took her gently by the shoulders and whispered till she heard. "I knew always, my darling. . . . I knew. . . . It does not matter. . . ." He said it over and over, while he stroked her hair and kissed her wet and salty cheeks.

She turned a face crumpled and blurred, unbeautiful for once, to him, and whispered, "You knew?"

"Well, I can count. . . . You were sick already the morning after our wedding night. That is not the way of nature." His eyes smiled, the crinkles deepening.

"I did not marry you for that, truly. I did not know myself—I was so . . . ignorant."

"You were an innocent, all wrapped in your cocoon of stage cobwebs." He shook his head, wonderingly. "Did you even know how

babies were made?" He laughed a little to show it was meant lightly, and she, after a moment, laughed too, shakily.

"I knew," she said, nodding. "It happens in plays . . . but I never thought it would happen to me." And she whispered, low, not looking at him, "Did you hate me for it?"

He shook his head. "I could never hate you. Only—sometimes—in the beginning—I used to wonder if you loved him still."

She frowned, remembering. "I think I had stopped . . . soon after I first met you. But I would not believe it. I would not let my misery go. I cannot explain. . . ." She raised her eyes, seeking the answer. "He never loved me at all, you know."

"He does not feel as deeply as you. Perhaps he did—in his way. But it is best not to delve too deeply. It is all so long ago . . . and if you love me . . . ?"

"For years . . . Truly, for so many years. I think you know."

"Yes, I know." He was silent for a little. "And I always thought of Timothy as my own. Even now I do."

She began to weep again, helplessly. "Oh, if only he had not ever met them . . . those awful Savages!"

There was nothing he could say to that, he thought, wryly. He took her in his arms, kissing her wet cheeks, smoothing her hair, and pulling her tenderly down beside him onto the bed. She was such a child still, he thought, for all her noble Greek looks, her emotions raw and red, just beneath the skin. And such a Savage, too, for all her resentments and disavowals. He made love to her, taking her inch by inch, wooing, and with great care, so that she ceased her tears and sobbing and cried out in joy.

Through the night they slept and woke, kissing and caressing; they murmured low, meaningless words, and clung passionately together, and lay, between times, in the sweet exhaustion of new-made lovers.

When the dawn light struck white and slanting across the pillow, Michael shook his head, blinking, and tiptoed across the cool boards of the floor to pull the heavy shutters together. There was still enough light, gray now, to see her figure, long and twisted, dark against the tumbled sheets. He stood, chilly in his nakedness, looking down at her; she stirred, and held out her arms.

"Did you really," he said, into her ear, "say those words . . . and stop the wedding?"

She nodded, burying her face in his neck. "It seemed . . . the only way. . . ."

"The newspaper described your traveling costume. I don't remember it."

"No," she said, her voice muffled. "I bought it in London."

"Then—" There was a suspicious catch, almost laughter, in his voice. "Then you had *not* just docked?"

"Three days before," she whispered. "I waited in the hotel."

"All planned, it was?"

"I could not see how else to do it." Her voice was stubborn, childish. A true Savage, he thought; anything for a scene. But he dared not say it, and shook his head silently and to himself, half in admiration. "And then you fainted?"

"That, too," she said. "It was all I could think of."

He loved her, but was gripped by strangeness, as though he held an ondine or a fairy in his arms. But then, suddenly, she spoke again, surprising him.

"You see, Michael, do you not? It *was* the only way . . . to make it unreal, like a scene in a play. . . . It hurt less . . . for everyone. How could I have told Timothy in cold blood! Or the girl . . . who was a stranger? Or—oh, my God—Tonio? And now . . . well, the awful thing is not so unspeakable . . . just another drama . . . and the curtain has come down upon it."

She was right, of course—how else to handle this terrible, near-comic circumstance? Her instincts had been unerring.

It was light enough to see her now; she lay very still against the pillow in a tangle of wild black hair, watching him. "I agree," he said. "Your intuition did not fail you. I wonder who it belonged to, though—the woman or the actress?"

He saw the gleam of her teeth. "Both, I suppose. And then, too—those words in the marriage service . . . they're so tempting. One always longs to be able to say, 'Stop . . . they cannot wed!' I knew I would never get another chance. . . ."

Laughter broke in his throat; he took her in his arms.

"It is not really funny," she said, laughing too.

"And we should not laugh about it," he said, barely getting the words out. And then they began to shake with it, helpless, rocking the bed till it groaned, and they groaned, too, with laughter, hearing it, and clung together, till the laughing turned to sobs and the healing tears ran down and mingled on their close-pressed cheeks.

## Chapter 11

And what of Timothy, in Boston? And what of Timothy, altogether? We have not spoken much of him, not his thoughts, or his feelings, or even his looks. He looked, though he did not know it, much like his ancestor Edward, of long ago. There was a likeness of that Edward drawn in red Florentine chalk, the actor holding his mask, but it was in the family hoard in London, and even Miranda did not remember it. There was the same long, oval face, a trifle melancholy, more than a trifle crooked, but with an undisputable charm, looking out from the sketch. His dark coloring he got from Miranda; his slim and jaunty carriage gave him a likeness to Michael, the boy having imitated the man, unknowing. Of his true father, Tonio, no sign showed; Timothy passed for handsome, but no Greek sculptor would have paid an obol for his services; it was handsomeness of another kind.

As to his thoughts, even he did not know them, though they had peopled many sleepless hours, advancing and retreating, like ghosts with half-hid faces. Some hours, too, he had spent in talking them over with his friend Lawrence, for they were students still, and inclined to wordy disputation. The two did not think the near past events funny, or even wry, but took all in heavy seriousness, for they were too young to see two sides of anything. Indeed, they argued between themselves, after the manner of old inward-seeking holy men who disputed the number of the angelic host that might dance upon the head of a pin. Would it have been incest anyway? Or would not the innocence of both parties have nullified the sin? Indeed, was it sin? *What* was sin? And so forth. And much was accomplished thus, of comfort and peace, for after a time it seemed to Timothy as though they spoke of olden times, or far places, or alien peoples, none of which concerned him closely; soon, it seemed, he had to concentrate strongly in order to remember his beloved's face. Who was, of course, no longer his beloved, but his sister, in any case.

Of the wedding fiasco they did not speak. The ceremony itself, in a *theater*, had shocked Lawrence's Puritan soul, though he had never mentioned it; that it had been prevented in such a theatrical manner



was no worse than it deserved. As for Timothy, such extravagance was the warp and woof of his everyday life; neither Miranda nor Michael had ever passed the butter dish without a flourish. No, once the two young friends had exhausted the spiritual arguments, they found themselves in other, temporal disputes. What of the King's will, what of Parliament? Had the colonies the right to govern themselves? Ought they, in all conscience, to join the Sons of Liberty? Before the ship had touched down in Boston harbor, and after five weeks of heated converse, they had nearly decided that they must.

Boston was a hotbed of insurrection and dissent; at every corner little knots of men gathered to protest against the hated English tax laws. Folk met, too, behind closed doors, to debate in a more seemly fashion; hardly a household but had taken one side or another, mostly Whig. Lawrence's family was no exception; the Durhams named themselves among the first settlers of those parts, folk that had fled England for the sake of principle, and so they continued, ranged against the mother country.

The Durham bookstore, on Queen Street, was the oldest in Boston; until two years ago it had been known as The English Book Corner; now it boasted a bright new sign painted by Mr. Paul Revere, depicting Liberty as a Roman matron wearing the round red cap known as the Liberty cap; the letters beneath spelled out LIBERTY CORNER. Besides having a large stock of imported goods in English, French, and Latin, the shop specialized in those patriotic poems and songs that were being set to English martial music and were popular even with the very poor, who could learn the latest fashion for a farthing. There was only one large window, bowed and mulioned, facing the front, so candles burned in wall sockets all day, giving off a sickly smell of tallow to mingle with the other odors of leather, oil, and dust. Timothy liked it, as he liked the smell of the theater, fusty, close, scented, and with the tallow smell, too; night places, he thought of them. Although at night the shop was closed and one went, if one knew about it, to the back room where the Sons of Liberty gathered behind closed shutters.

The two young men went there on their first Friday night, following in the wake of Lawrence's older brothers, Tom and Joshua, already Libertarians this year past; they were sworn in secretly and a little childishly, in a solemn ceremony involving brandy, blood, and the Bible.

Timothy was a trifle let down because the leader of the movement, Sam Adams, was not there; this man, maverick son of a well-

respected New England family, was talked of everywhere, even so far away as New York. Named by some a ranting demagogue, he was hero and saint to the Sons of Liberty, and the mouthpiece of their cause. "Well, of course," thought Timothy, "he cannot be everywhere." The Sons of Liberty had more than a thousand meeting places in the city of Boston alone, and membership was spreading throughout the thirteen colonies.

The Durhams' house, facing the Common, was big and comfortable, built square, like a box, of rosy half-bricks outside and thick oak beams within; it had none of the grace and lightness of the Savages' pretty little town house in London, nor yet the poky, cluttered charm of Miranda's rented New York dwelling; the great Boston houses looked built to last. Indeed, three generations of Durhams had made no mark on theirs; the colors of the Turkey rug in the drawing room were bright against the dark polished wood, the long dining table had not a scratch to mar its shining surface, and there was never a creak of stair board underfoot or a grating shutter to hand. The downstairs rooms were cool and high-ceilinged with a hint of lemon on the air from the oiled furniture; upstairs the cupboards were pungent with cedar and sandalwood and the bed hangings opened to the faint sweetness of lavender. Timothy sighed; he was sure that never in his life would he live in such a house.

He put aside the thought, dimly formed, that he would never have such a father and mother either. Mr. and Mrs. Durham looked, to his eyes, as though they were made up and costumed for a stage grandmother and grandfather. Middle-sized, with white hair above healthy, high-colored faces, they looked padded to fit their comfortably bulky clothes. They had kind eyes, flat voices, spare speech, and no gestures; his mother, without rancor, would have dismissed them as bit players.

Both elder sons read law with a prominent judge, whose competence just barely overset his Tory leanings; all of the Durhams were fair-minded, and would give everyone, except possibly the Devil, his due. Timothy saw them seldom, for they were energetic after hours on Liberty business, mysterious doings that took them often to neighboring towns.

Lawrence, like Timothy, had left his Oxford studies unfinished; there was a restless spirit in all the youth of the day, on both sides of the Atlantic; times were unsettled, and change was in the air.

Besides, felt Lawrence, two lawyers in a family were enough, surely, and someone must continue the book business; already

Lawrence spent half-days at the shop, learning the trade. It left Timothy on his own a great deal, but he did not mind at all, for he enjoyed poking about the city alone, or driving out into the countryside in the company of Lawrence's sisters.

These were the "nice" young girls Miranda had seen earlier when the boat had docked to let off the passengers for Boston. Distracted, she had not caught their names, which was perhaps fortunate, as they were called Faith, Hope, and Charity. Even Timothy, that serious youth, had smiled when he heard, for he thought the names too fanciful even for theater people. How was he to know that for more than a century New England had been famous for such names? Indeed, the Durhams' next-door neighbors had a daughter, Prudence, and just around the corner lived a Temperance!

They were uncommonly pretty girls, as Beau had been quick to notice, and not nearly so alike as Miranda had thought. The Savages, Garricks, Malones, and all stage folk looked at the rest of the world as most folk looked at blackamoors, or Chinese: they could never tell them apart.

Timothy, still young, had no such failing; he saw instantly that the youngest, Charity, was the most beautiful. Nor did he think it strange that, after the instant dissolution of his romance with Lucy Ann, he should once again fall, as instantly, in love.

Charity Durham was in all ways the opposite of Lucy Ann. She had none of Lucy's airs and graces, no dimples and no fluttering lashes; she did not know what it meant to flirt. She was not prim, like her sisters, who were already on the way to spinsterhood. No, she was uncommonly still and grave, with a sunny bloom upon her like the yellow dust on a buttercup; Timothy felt it, warm and golden, in her first handshake, firm as a man's.

Like a man's, too, was her conversation, of books and philosophy, of ethics and God. She had read much, and thought more; she talked in an earnest, lecturing tone, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes shining with sincerity; Timothy was as beguiled as he had ever been by Lucy's frivolous chatter. You are not to think that Timothy was fickle; he had made a false start, and Fate had rightly condemned it; this was the path that, truly, he must tread.

As for brown-haired Charity, how could she not respond? Such devotion as Timothy's had never come her way; the young men of her acquaintance often shied away from her, pretty as she was; she was undoubtedly what would later be known as a "bluestocking." Timothy, from childhood, had been accustomed to thoughtful and ar-

ticulate women; though he did not know it, like most sons, he took his mother for a wifely pattern.

In some dim recess of his mind, he shied away from writing of his new love; his letters were chatty and entertaining, and did not mention anything close to his heart, not even Liberty. Michael and Miranda locked eyes above the latest close-written page, and nodded, wisely. "The young are so resilient!" sighed Miranda, her hand pressed to her heart.

The young sweethearts bent their best efforts to winning the Durhams' blessing on their union. Timothy had much in his favor: he was personable, high-minded, and not poor, though perhaps his heritage might be deemed ill-gotten.

Boston had no theaters, and there was an ordinance, long-standing, against professional players; the Puritans of the New World were slow to give up the prejudices they had fought for long ago. The Durhams, however, were more worldly than some of their neighbors, being book-readers; they had heard of the London Savages, who by now were almost respectable, and the Malones' company, in New York, scorned the more salacious farces and stuck mainly to Shakespeare; after some thought, they decided they did not hold Timothy's family against him. Besides, they owned a certain basic realism; it was plain to see their older daughters would never get husbands, nor had Charity, up to now, ever had a suitor. Perhaps it was all for the best. Unmentioned was the knowledge that if they did not give consent, Charity would marry him without it; she was a very determined young lady.

Michael and Miranda did not come to the wedding; they had not, in fact, been invited or even informed, though only Timothy knew that. "They cannot leave the theater in the season," he stated. "And we will visit New York on our honeymoon trip."

They were married in the plain wooden church where the first Durhams had worshiped. The service was Low Church and much abbreviated, but the familiar warning was still there, near the end, though the minister read it in a flat singsong. If Timothy's face turned the color of the rose bricks of the Durham mansion, it went unnoticed; he was, after all, a bridegroom.



## Chapter 12

Miranda had never in her life lived with another woman, except in the context of that theatrical-company intimacy which is known as "one big, happy family." Such contacts were, however, impermanent and passing, to be endured for one season, or two at the most. This was, as she confided tearfully to Michael, "another kettle of fish" entirely. He stroked her shoulder soothingly, wondering where in the world she had picked up such a homely expression, and pondered once again the problem of the new little daughter-in-law.

The Murray Street house, never commodious, was crowded to the bursting point, what with five in residence, Cook, and the little maid of all work. To be sure, the little maid slept in a sort of cubby off the kitchen, but Cook, a mammoth black freedwoman, must have her proper bedroom, the third best, under the eaves. It was unthinkable that Beau, their English kinsman, should go to a hostelry; unthinkable that the children should not look upon this house as their home. So Michael's snug office had gone to Beau, and the young couple occupied the second-best chamber, next to their own.

After the initial shock—and it had been considerable—Miranda had rallied and welcomed Charity with grace and genuine warmth. "After all," Beau said, wickedly, "she might have been so much worse!" Miranda giggled but shook her finger at him. "I think her charming," she said firmly. "So sincere." She did not know that those were the very words with which Tonio's Lucia had dismissed her, Miranda, long ago!

The newlyweds had arrived at the worst possible time; in darkness, at the theater, after a first-night performance, the controversial *Hamlet*, which had been a failure. The first-night audience had not liked Beau's quiet, casual Dane, and had begun to file out silently in the middle of the first curtain call. Charity, who had never set foot in a theater before and did not know that audiences were supposed to clap, was enthralled and full of shy awkward compliments; Timothy, who had not liked it at all, wondered why Beau had not been booed.

They had somehow risen above it, as players will; they had consumed the champagne supper, making it into a wedding celebration

as well; at last, exhausted, Miranda had roused the little maid to turn out the rooms and bring fresh linen. "If you had told me where things were," said Charity, a tiny line showing between her eyebrows, "I would have attended to all that, Mother Malone. Servants must have their rest."

The young couple said good night, and shut their chamber door. "Great God!" said Beau. "Mother Malone!"

Miranda flashed him a haughty look. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean," she said, coldly. "I quite like it." But she did not. Michael, remembering, repressed a smile, seeing in his mind her face, shut in upon itself, at those moments, all too frequent, when she was so addressed. And so it had gone, small things heaped upon small things to irritate and annoy, and the young wife gathering ever more firmly the reins of housekeeping into her own small, capable hands. "Mother Malone has so much to do . . . I will do the shopping." Or the hiring, or the supervising, or the household accounts. It was true that Miranda was sadly lacking as a chatelaine, being of a generous, untidy nature. Things ran more smoothly now, for the most part, though the little maid was often in tears, and at least twice a week Cook threatened to take her magnificent soufflés elsewhere. Just this morning Michael had had another ultimatum, punctuated by hot, angry eyes and thrust-out underlip. "My kitchen! No one comes in my kitchen! Little Missus Snippet!" Michael sighed; he must talk, once again, to Charity. Though now, God knew, was hardly the time.

For both of the women were pregnant, not two months' difference between them, and the younger very sick with it, and fretful. Miranda, on the contrary, had never felt better; she had shed at least ten years. Her dark skin glowed warm and golden, with a high color she had never owned before, and her step was as light as a girl's. Though she was nearly five months along, it did not show yet, for she was tall and long-waisted. "I shall play, as I did the last time, right up to the first tremors!" she cried happily.

Poor Charity, slight and small, looked bloated and pale, like a slug; her ankles were swollen already, and a little bulge showed, too, under the gathered folds of her skirt. Her Puritan upbringing would not allow her to spare herself or rest, though she looked ready to drop when she came in from her self-appointed shopping chores. Nor would she go early to bed, but must wait up for Timothy, with cakes and cocoa, when he came home from the theater.

For the son had taken his place in the family profession, as easily

as if he had never been off to school, or London, or Boston. To be sure, it was not a taxing role—Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*—but he showed a good presence, speaking his lines well and clearly, and getting a small, ardent sympathy from the speeches; he had his own following already, among the young wives and daughters of the British officers in the boxes. This play was always a favorite, and never more so than with these new additions to the cast. For, though Beau had had a cool reception as Hamlet, his Mercutio, worldly, wry, and mocking, had made a huge success. Dressed in tawny velvet, his hair a paler burnish above it, he stood in a languid pose, leaning negligently against column or rail, sword trailing carelessly from his right hand or tracing idle patterns in the dust, while his left hand pressed against his breast as if to stanch a wound. It was an unusual, brilliant performance, full of wit and hinting at inner agony; if it had not been for Miranda, he might well have stolen the show, as players say. Miranda's Juliet was a creature of incomparable beauty and grace; she was not so much youthful in the part as the soul of youth, all innocence and fire, a thing to marvel at. She had played the part before many times, but something lent her an incandescence now that she had never had in the past. Michael said it was her new happiness (for, truly, the two were wild with joy at the thought of bringing forth, at last, a child of their own).

She smiled at him fondly, and nodded, but privately, within herself, she attributed it all to Beau's direction. For he had made so many astute recommendations, such canny observations, from the very start, that Michael, a canny showman himself, had relinquished the reins; this production, startlingly new and natural, was all Beau's. To begin with, the costumes were fourteenth-century—in those times an innovation in itself, for all plays were customarily dressed in the wigs, knee breeches, and petticoats of the day (Garrick had played King Lear upon the mountain in a bag wig and ruffled neckcloth). Nor was any attempt made to approximate the historic settings, and scenes were usually played against flowered wallpaper and among Georgian furnishings.

Beau had devised a simple setting of arches and columns, against which platforms and stairs might be moved as the scenes progressed, with the simplest furniture: an old, borrowed Gothic chair from a forgotten attic, an iron-bound chest, a massive table, long discarded. He had lit the stage with torches, and done away with the unsightly footlights, square boxes in which floated naptha-lit wicks; the effect may not have been authentic, but the flaring torchlight made effec-

tive shadows, and gave a feeling of a richer, cruder time. The jerkins and hose, the square-necked, flowing gowns, the sword belts and the heavy furred mantles created a remarkable new atmosphere of darkness and mystery; the actors moved with a legendary grace, and the rich wild poetry rang true and fresh, infinitely moving; nothing like it had ever been seen, not in New York or even in London. The audiences crowded the little theater, wept, applauded wildly, and came back again and again. There was no thought of changing the bill; the audiences wanted nothing else. "We can run this one until we get too old for it!" cried Michael, jubilant. "Or at least until the baby comes," said Miranda.

Timothy, who enjoyed acting as much as any of his Savage forebears, yet felt a vague disquiet. Standing in the wings, waiting for his cue, he would feel the wind of his brilliant mother's passage as she brushed by him for her first entrance. Close to, the makeup stood out, startlingly thick and white, slashing small lines beside her mouth and eyes; the golden voice, barely a foot away, seemed to rumble within his own chest; the careless trill of childish laughter grated on his soul, like a fingernail against an iron fender.

Beau had given Miranda a childish prop, a many-colored child's ball, large and round, which the fourteen-year-old hoydenish Juliet, skirts hiked high above bare girlish feet, tossed into the air as she entered, half skipping. It made an arresting picture, the long, loose black hair with one crimson rose caught artfully among the unbound locks, the vivid, laughing face, the flame-red gown, and, behind, the scolding nurse, carrying the little, pointed velvet shoes. The instantaneous burst of applause was deafening; it was sometimes a full minute before the pair could get on with the first line. A marvelous effect it was, surely, and obviously the folk out front ate it up, but privately Timothy thought the toy ball more suited to a ten-year-old than to fourteen; it must be remembered he had not yet himself reached twenty! It cannot be easy, even in a player family, to watch one's mother, embarrassingly pregnant, act the lisping child. To be fair, Miranda did not lisp—far from it; nor did Timothy voice his feelings. Except to mutter once, Beau being near, that he wondered what she would do when the baby showed. "Set her girdle higher, of course!" cried Beau, gaily.

Though Timothy's heart sank, this did not happen; Beau was far cleverer than that. No, Miranda's performance underwent a subtle change; from the hoyden it went to the dreamer. Her entrance now was made with a book, a pretty and feminine book of gold-tooled



leather from which a scarlet ribbon trailed. She wore, instead of red, Madonna blue, of a medieval length to fall in folds at her feet. With one long, slender hand she clasped the voluminous skirt at her bosom, so that it cleared the floor; with the other she held the book before her, her lips moving as she read the words soundlessly, a rapt expression on her face. They had got the posture from an old Flemish woodcut; the legend beneath declared it to be a "maiden reading from 'Le Roman de la Rose.'" Upon this milder Juliet's head, in place of the wild, rose-entangled locks, was a pearl chaplet which cupped the back of the head (taken from another ancient woodcut); the soft, dark tendrils curled around this cap of pearls, a becoming frame for the face; in later years this was known as "the Juliet cap" and no actress ever essayed the role without it.

With the help of flowing, ungirdled robes, capes, and cloaks, Miranda played until a few weeks before the baby was due; they had no replacement for her, for she *was* the show in truth; Michael as Romeo was handsome and romantic, but somewhat lacking in fire, as he was first to admit. Instead, they took off *Romeo and Juliet* and put on in its place that other great favorite of the colonies, Farquhar's *Beux' Stratagem*. This play had worn out its welcome in London, though one might see it occasionally in a provincial town. Garrick had been successful in it two decades earlier, and our Beau had revived it ten years ago; in Jamaica and New England it never failed, nor did it now, even without Miranda. She disliked it anyway; it will be remembered that comedy was not her forte, and this play was an extravagant farce.

Beau, as was to be expected, was brilliant in it. The role of the exaggerated dandy wedded to him and he to it. As in the case with other Savages long dead, his name became a household word, at least among the twenty thousand souls of little New York City. Many a pretty fair-haired boy child born that year, or the next, bore the name Beau in his honor. He could not walk two blocks without being recognized, and a little crowd of half-grown girls, flushed with their daring truancy, collected outside the theater to wait for him to appear for the evening's performance. Tailors begged to fit him for no charge—"It will be an advertisement!" they assured him, beaming. He shrugged, and picked the best. He was courted by the wealthy families of the Broad Way, too; not a week passed that he was not off to some dinner party or collation on the fashionable west side. Part of it was snob appeal, as this clever child of the slums knew well; Beau was so very British; it was the next best thing to

having King George himself to dine! He shrugged again, and accepted the invitations; the beef and the wine were good, and, for the rest, there was always rare material for mimicry! Great and near-great passed across his vision: Copley, the New England painter; Ben Franklin, the Quaker news man; Lord Howe; the wit Aaron Burr; the gentleman-farmer Washington.

They prospered; it was all so easy! The same play week after week, and no rehearsals, and the money, good British crowns, rolling in! If only the theater were bigger! But there was no room at all to expand, to build on; like the other theater, the John Street, their Nassau Street house was jammed up against neighboring structures on both sides. The John Street Theatre, operated by David Douglas, did well, too, though it was even smaller, with a tiny stage. The Malones' theater seated about six hundred; they had put money back into it, building another tier of boxes and a small balcony, and enlarging the stage. They had put in wall sconces and another great chandelier; it was uncommonly well lit, and attractively decorated, rivaling the best of London—Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Even the cheap seats were sturdy and comfortable, and sixpence bought a cushion. It was cleaner, too, than the John Street, for they had recently done away with the selling of ale and sweetmeats, except during the interval, though it was impossible to discourage tea-drinking throughout the performance. The actors by now were deaf to those small sounds of cup striking saucer, and even of the occasional tinkle of broken crockery; it was, at any rate, a noisy audience, arriving after the curtain had gone up, wandering about, greeting friends, exchanging gossip. One of Miranda's greatest tributes was the saying that during her big scenes one might hear a mouse squeak.

The caliber of theater production in the colonies was very low; there were no native actors or producers, and those recruited from Britain were, by and large, folk who had already failed in the mother country or young people still untried. Settings and costumes were makeshift, the actors often dependent upon the largesse of rich patrons to clothe a part, and stage furniture borrowed from a carpenter. Candles were dreadfully expensive, and tallow dripped upon the heads of the audience; lighting was mainly from a mixture of kerosene, gum, and resin, which smoked and smelled foul. There was always danger from the crude footlights, even though they were enclosed in oiled-paper boxes; audiences were quite accustomed to the actress holding back her full skirts to avoid the flames downstage at her feet, and even to the occasional little fire, which often provided

the only excitement in an otherwise pedestrian performance. Players ranted in tragedy and grimaced in comedy; actors "upstaged" one another on the graded stages, often introducing new business; it was "anything for a laugh," and the enmity among players was adamant and bitter; in the Douglas company there had been two duels, incapacitating both participants twice, and in Virginia an actor had even died of his wounds. Small wonder that the Malone company drew its enormous crowds and its accolades from the news men! For here in the Nassau Street theater were at least four actors of the first quality, and two who might easily be termed geniuses. Regular customers saw each play over and over, and no visitor was allowed to go away without sampling this "best of New York." Even the poorer sort in the audience knew by instinct that they were sometimes in the presence of greatness, and those traveled few recognized it from experience.

Michael need not have worried himself over the problem of the two women; "Mother Malone" sailed through her pregnancy like a full-rigged ship before a west wind, happy and victorious. In the spring she gave birth (as easily as a cat, said Beau) to a beautiful girl, small and perfect as a rosebud; they called her Marie, after the popular French Queen. Little Charity, big as a barn, was put to bed weeks early by a fearful doctor, and was far too sick to care who did the shopping. She had a very hard time of it, laboring three full days and nights, and even Cook prayed to wild African gods for her. The issue was a strapping pair of twins; the ordeal nearly killed her, and she vowed, her fine eyes stormy, that she would never go through it again.

It was a week before Charity would look at her twin babies; by then they had lost their first frog resemblance and, though red and wrinkled, at least looked human. The boy was christened Samuel, after Timothy's hero, Sam Adams, and the little girl Liberty, but she was five years old before the prophecy of her name was fulfilled, and by then she answered to Libby.

## Chapter 13

By the year 1776 the colonies were in full revolt, and New York had fallen to the British. It had been a nearly bloodless struggle on Manhattan Island; the fleeing patriot army, under General George Washington, had lost only fifty-odd killed or wounded; the huge British force had a mere handful of casualties. Two hours after General Howe's Hessians, some ten thousand, had landed at Kips Bay, most of the island was secured. When Fort Washington surrendered, two months later, the last gun was fired in Manhattan during the war.

But another war was waged in the captive city, an underground war which continued during the seven years of the British occupation. It was a war of terror and subversion, burning and looting, and its soldiers were the youthful idealists, the Sons of Liberty. Not a day passed without its Tory shopwindow stoned and shattered, its Tory warehouse set ablaze. Under cover of night, respectable burghers loyal to the King were dragged from their beds, coated with boiling tar, and feathered, or ridden naked on a rail till they were maimed for life. The insurrectionists were disguised as Indians, their faces daubed with soot and paint; unrecognizable, they melted into the dark streets before the British patrols could put musket to shoulder. Tory city though it was, there were "safe" houses everywhere, especially in the poorer quarters; there were dank cellars, musty attics, even privies, which could harbor a fugitive for a week, and market boats to smuggle him past the warships to Long Island, which was nearly as solidly Whig as Boston.

There was yet another war throughout those seven years, a silent war, a war of intrigue; New York was the spy corner of the Revolution. The city had upward of a hundred coffee houses and taverns, and more than two hundred brothels; homesick, lonely British officers talked indiscreetly in their cups, or boasted into perfumed ears. Cryptic ciphers in invisible ink, signed by coded names, were smuggled out of town in the bindings of books or in the sole of a boot; the wooden stays of a corset were a favorite hiding-place, and never detected, for the British officer was a gentleman first.

Timothy, early on, changed his surname, taking the name of Sav-



age, onstage and off. Anxiously he explained that he would not wish to endanger the others when the fray thickened; as a sworn Son of Liberty, he was fully expectant of being called to serve his emerging fatherland. Michael said, with a sad whimsy, that Timothy was entitled to the Savage name, none more so; Timothy looked at him reproachfully, saying, "You are my only father, sir, I swear!"

Timothy was turned away when he attempted to enlist in the provisional army of the Continentals, though in other places boys of twelve were welcomed in the ranks; he was told "there would be other work for him—more hazardous and more important." Daily he expected the summons to the Culper Ring, the code name for the Manhattan espionage agency. It never came, though he studied ciphering and coding, perfected his already extensive use of disguise, and laid in a supply of materials for the making of invisible ink.

Nor was he given the brutal and dangerous work assigned to other Libertarians—the terrorist tactics of setting fires, destroying property, punishing Tories. Perhaps because of his profession, or his higher learning, he was sent to lecture at meetings, to recruit new membership, or to inflame the lethargic to action. As time went by, his understudy played more often than not, for Timothy, lecturing in another town, sometimes could not be back at curtain time.

Miranda complained, bred as she was from childhood to the discipline of the theater. "He takes a dreadful advantage," she said. "Another player would be dismissed without notice."

Michael spoke to placate her, saying, "Bear with him . . . the times are unique. History is in the making." His eyes misted; the siren voice of Liberty had whispered to him, too. "If I were only younger . . ."

Miranda stared at him. "Nonsense, my dear! It is all a tempest in a teacup! Look at the troubles in France . . . they have been going on since I can remember! Hotheads ranting in the streets . . . inflammatory brochures . . . factions for this and that of politics . . . What has it amounted to? Nothing has changed . . . nor ever will."

Michael shook his head. "Give it time. Change does not happen overnight. A new era is coming. . . ."

"Not this way," she said firmly. "Not with catch phrases and ranting. Not with destructive acts and inflammatory talk!" She sighed. "And then they are so *dull* . . . Charity as well! One can hardly bear to listen to them. Every other word is 'liberty' . . . or 'Sam Adams says' . . . It is as though that maniac were their god!"

"Be patient, my dear," said Michael, smiling. "It is not so long since Garrick was yours."

She shot him a sharp glance. "That is different! The stage is my profession!"

"And the pursuit of liberty is theirs," he answered, quietly. "You cannot order another's mind . . . even your son's."

She was silent then, and thoughtful. "No," she said, finally, shaking her head. "Nor do I wish it."

"But you are right . . . he cannot be allowed to miss performances. I will speak to him about it."

"He could be fined, perhaps," said Beau, lightly. "It was the old way—and always worked."

They all laughed then, and began to talk of olden days and other times, of England, and Italy, and the theater, so close to their hearts.

As it turned out, strict measures did not need to be taken; with the coming of the British troops, there was little lecturing, no more out-of-town trips, no meeting of the Sons of Liberty. Curfew was imposed, and no one moved about after dark without a special pass.

David Douglas' John Street Theatre was closed for the duration of the war; this company had always pandered to low tastes, performing broad farces and bloody tragedies; the authorities feared the outbreak of rioting where so many of the vulgar mob gathered.

The Malones were given a special license to perform, provided they put in another row of boxes and cut the cheap seats by half; also they were forbidden to play anything except Shakespeare. Michael and Miranda were sure they owed this leniency to Beau, for he still spent much time in the company of the great and near-great of the British occupation. He denied it; he said that the British exiles could not do without the wonderful Malones. "You are their culture, my dears!"

Beau had gradually reverted to his old form; the simplicity of dress and manner had been cultivated for *Hamlet*, which had not succeeded, and for American audiences, who were already captured and would swallow anything from Beau. He had gone back to his powder and paint, his satins and laces, his jewels and his scents. Upon his head he wore the brand-new London exquisite's toupee, the "Macaroni," brushed erect a full foot above the forehead and sporting large curls over each ear. He wore gold-spangled frogs on his coat, tight knee breeches of striped or polka-dotted silk, and a knot of fresh flowers at his breast. His walking-stick, festooned with tassels, was used to lift off the tiny tricorne hat perched on top of his towering

hair style. He was much imitated, even among the colonial-born; a popular song, published in England, went the rounds of the British regiments; "Yankee Doodle Dandy" was its title, and it ridiculed these would-be fops who so awkwardly, by London standards, aped their betters.

Though Beau disclaimed British partiality, it was nonetheless true that he enjoyed many privileges, and all the company with him, which were not accorded to other citizens of the occupied island. To begin with, an armed escort had been sent to take them through the dark, dangerous streets to the theater, and to bring them home afterward. This was truly essential, for nowhere was it safe after night fell; if their persons were not threatened by the more ruffianly of the Libertarians, their very lives were forfeit from those other criminal elements which flourish, always, in a policed state.

Quite possibly, it was this soldierly protection which saved their theater on the night, less than a week after the British take-over, of the great fire which left more than a third of the city charred and blackened. No one knew who had started it, though the Sons of Liberty, of course, were blamed; it might well have been an accident. The night was warm and windy; no rain had fallen for a month; the flames spread terrifyingly, buildings going up like tinder, gutted in the space of minutes; the devastated area covered miles of city blocks. Boats in the harbor were damaged by flying sparks or blazing timbers falling across their decks; whole streets were destroyed in the poorer sections, and the orchards behind the great mansions were left stripped and bare. The John Street Theatre burned to the ground; only the stage was left, like a gallows platform, broken and black. Miraculously the Malones' theater was untouched, though just around the corner an entire block was leveled to the ground. Neither was their dwelling in the path of the fire; smoke blackened all the ceilings and walls, and the furniture smelled of it for weeks, but they counted themselves uncommonly fortunate.

"It will only need a little paint," said Miranda, shakily, clutching her little Marie in her arms. The two women, so often at odds, eyed each other mutely above their sleepy children, in the early morning light; so many had perished in the long, dreadful night while they had stood helpless in the street, summoned from their beds by the alarm bells of Trinity Church nearby. The church itself had suffered, its stones dark and its wooden door burned away, but it still stood, tall against the dying flames, its steeple pointing, like a finger, to the sky.

The church was filled, even to the courtyard, with refugees—women and children mostly, for the men were still out, wearily fighting the flames. Many were homeless, all over the city, and doors were thrown open to them everywhere; a family of seven was crowded into the parlor of the Malones' house, and the theater was filled to bursting. The British army cooks boiled huge kettles of soup at streetcorners; lines of people waited, patient, large-eyed, shivering in the mild September weather, their limbs stiff with shock. Bakers made loaves by the thousand, too; the smells of hot bread and stewing meat mingled with the sicker smell of charred things. A pall of black smoke hung over the city like a stormcloud. It had not lifted at all by mid-afternoon. "No performance tonight," said Michael, "or next week, I shouldn't wonder."

"I have a speaking engagement tomorrow," said Timothy, anxiously. "Will the roads be clear, do you think?"

"What, on Sunday?" asked Miranda.

"Well, Mother, you said I'd best not miss another performance." Timothy's voice had an aggrieved sound.

Miranda made an impatient noise with her tongue and teeth, and said, "Surely your 'speaking engagement' can wait, now of all times."

"Now of all times it must not wait!" cried Charity, flaring hotly. "Do you know how many Libertarians they have thrown into the flames or spitted on bayonets? We are always blamed! Timothy must tell them to keep faith, those that are left of us. Or join us in the fight."

"Where will you speak?" asked Beau. "Where is the place?"

"Somewhere off the Post Road," said Timothy. "West of the Dove Tavern. I have a map."

"You will never get through today," said Beau. "They are stopping all horsemen and carriages at each crossing. And the Dove is British quarters . . . or at least next to it. Artillery Park must have more than two thousand troops encamped. Still—it is a good long ride away. What if you got a start at dawn tomorrow? You'd make the Dove by morning. . . . I know the commander there . . . I'll go along, if you like."

"Oh . . . if you would!" said Timothy gratefully. "They'd never suspect anything if I were with you!"

"Beau, that's lovely of you!" cried Miranda. "I will feel so much easier. Do you really know the commander?"

"Captain Montresor . . . indeed I do!" said Beau, contriving with a lifted brow to make the acquaintanceship seem slightly clandestine;



Miranda, used to Beau's ways, smiled, but Charity looked a little affronted. Beau cast her a wicked glance and said, "You'd never know it to look at him, my dears, but he's a veteran of the French-Indian wars . . . fought under Braddock! Must be forty if he's a day, but not a gray hair, not a wrinkle! Must ask him how he does it." He patted his own bright wig, pulling a curl forward, and strolled off saying blithely, "At dawn, then, Timothy, old dear . . ."

Charity looked after him with distaste. "They're all alike, the British! Fops . . . or worses!"

"Not Beau," said Timothy, shaking his head. "You don't understand him, darling." He reflected, sadly, not for the first time, that his darling was a little short on humor.

## Chapter 14

Sunday morning was bright and hot, the early sun piercing through rifts in the cloud of smoke that still hung behind them, in the east. Here along the Post Road it had lifted a little; most of the fire had confined itself to the lower part of the island, and ahead the sky had lost its yellowish tinge; the air was almost clear, though the breeze blew a hot breath already, at nine o'clock. To their right, in the East River, little wavelets sparkled, hard as diamonds. Their horses' hooves made a slow, steady drubbing on the dirt road; they had nothing but nags, for most of the stables, flimsy, wooden things, had burned in the great fire, and the horses fled or perished.

They had passed Kip's Bay, with the huge British fleet stretched out downriver, and, farther on, the tents of General Howe's detachment that surrounded the Beekman mansion; the road was clear now for about a mile, till the next British encampment, near Dove's Tavern. They had had no trouble passing; Beau had a piece of paper, magical, that brought salutes and waves through the lines. He only smiled when Timothy questioned him. "My secret, cousin," he said, dabbing at his forehead with a scented handkerchief. "Just count your blessings, my boy, and pray our luck lasts." Timothy had no idea why Beau had come at all; he had no politics to speak of; for the adventure, perhaps. He was singing now, in his fine, light voice, a

song unfamiliar to Timothy, with French words. He broke off to point ahead with his riding crop. "There . . . I can see the tents—Artillery Park. Put on an innocent face!"

Timothy saw a sea of canvas, stretching all about through the apple trees, whose boughs showed between like feathers tossing in pointed hats; there were tents on each side of the road, down to the water's edge, and, opposite, clear up the wide hillside; the eye could not see so far as the place where the camp ended. He began to feel the tightening fingers of fear in his stomach, like a little cramp; at the same time his senses were all heightened, a flush mounting swiftly in his face, his skin tautening; a breath of air blew fresh, untainted, from the river, upon his hot face. His hands, almost unconsciously, pulled at the reins, though the horse could not go much more slowly. "This is the enemy in all his strength," he thought, taking the phrase from some dim-remembered poem or play.

The road now was thick with muffling dust; waves of heat shimmered on it whitely, far ahead. The morning was breathlessly still; through the silence came the crunch of the sun-dried grass under a sentry's boot, and, far away, the dull, insistent beat of a single drum.

The sentry was, incredibly, saluting; he handed the paper back to Beau; for the first time Timothy noticed the great gold seal that hung from it. "Captain Montresor?" said Beau, haughty.

"Up there, Yer Honor," answered the sentry. "There . . . the big tent with the flag . . ."

The camp had a Sunday look; soldiers lounged in front of their canvas lean-tos, weary-looking; most of them had been fire-fighting day and night since the Friday fire. Some were at off-duty chores, cleaning and oiling muskets, polishing boots, or wringing out laundry; here and there one raised an incurious eye as the two horsemen picked their way among the tents.

Captain Montresor was in his shirt-sleeves, bending over a great map spread out on a makeshift table; his scarlet coat, heavy with gold braid, hung on a chair. He reached out a hand to take it up when he heard the two men dismount.

"Let it lie, Johnny!" cried Beau. "I have seen you in less attire!"

"Beau!" Montresor clasped Beau's shoulders, his thin face lightening. "I had heard you were acting in New York, but have had no leisure to attend. How long since we met?"

Beau shrugged, smiling. "Five years! Six? And now you are aide-de-camp to Howe—and chief engineer, is it?"

"Call it mapmaker," said Montresor, with a wintry smile. "I have

been this side of the ocean all this time—most of it deployed with pen and ink.”

“There is an island named for you, I hear, in this very river.”

“No great shakes,” said Montresor. “After such canoeing as I have done, day in, day out, along these shores, I have staked out a claim on Manhattan itself!”

“How is your sword arm?” asked Beau, giving it a small fisting.

“Healed. But I still bear the scar.” They faced each other, eye to eye, for a long moment; something wry and secret seemed to run between them, like a current beneath a stream.

Montresor spoke first, very low. “And Milady?”

“Not worth the inquiry, as ever,” answered Beau. “She has had five-and-twenty duelings done over her since ours, two fatal.”

“Never mind,” said Montresor, laughing a little. “She has cured me of all save tavern-wenches.”

“No wife?” asked Beau.

“Never a one,” said Montresor. “And you?”

Beau shook his head. “The stage has tarts aplenty, as well.” He turned then and brought Timothy forward. “I forget . . . you have not met my young kinsman, my cousin—a dozen times removed, but another miming Savage.”

“You resemble your mother, sir,” said Montresor, proffering his hand. “I saw her once in London, years ago. A lovely young actress, and promising.”

“The promise is fulfilled, and more,” said Beau. “I think she is surely now the greatest artist of her sex . . . and not greatly changed by her years.” He sighed. “Best catch her soon . . . before your Howe closes down our theater.”

“Will that happen, do you think?”

“We live on sufferance. The other one is closed already, David Douglas’ John Street.”

“It is utterly destroyed anyway,” said Timothy. “The fire did not touch ours.”

“Oh, the fire!” cried Montresor softly. “Damn the Libertarians—they have done their cause the worst injustice.”

“It was not—!” began Timothy hotly; he stopped, forbearing to wince as Beau’s long nails dug into the flesh of his arm.

“If they did not set it,” said Beau, with a mocking laugh, “yet it will be held against them, as all mischiefs are so held.”

“They are ruffians all . . . the worser part of all these colonials,” said Montresor. “I should be glad to come upon a nest of them, and

so smoke them out. It is said there is such a nest not far from here. I have spared a whole battalion from the fire-fighting—in pairs and threes and fours they have searched this countryside all roundabout, from sunset through the night. I doubt not we shall see some fish in such a net!” He bent again over his map. “Look here . . .” He pointed with his pen to a spot in an upper corner. “This place—a deserted barn, with rotted outbuildings . . . they have met there before now, so our informants tell us.” He shrugged. “God grant we come upon them as they meet in large numbers . . . and so save searching another day!”

The map was a greater version of the one that Timothy had spread out that morning, and the place where the pen pointed was the place of meeting. Timothy let out his breath softly, for he knew that none would gather there till late in this Sunday afternoon; he prayed there had been no early arrivals.

“What will you do with these fish you catch?” inquired Beau lightly.

“There is no proof of treason against them . . . but such gatherings are forbidden by order of His Majesty. So—” and he shrugged again. “We can at least clap them in jail for a week or two. If we can discourage these Sons of Liberty, this war may be of short duration, and save the land much ravaging and sorrow.”

“You speak as though all the troops ranged against King George were none but these hotheads . . . and yet are sober folk also disgusted with our Georgie-porgie’s unjust laws . . . as in England with his habits,” said Beau, as if idly, but watching Montresor’s face with care.

“I could have you in irons for less,” said Montresor. “Hold your player’s tongue!” But the corner of his thin mouth curled a little as he spoke, and the light in his eyes belied his words.

“A Savage has been hanged before now,” said Beau, “and by another kingly oppression. . . . I bear his name, too.” One eyebrow leaped high in Beau’s face, giving him a look of the sardonic Mercutio he had played so well; then he grinned whitely, saying, “Never fear, friend . . . I do not take sides. ‘A plague on both your houses!’”

All this while the distant drum had been sounding, coming nearer; the rhythm of it was clear now: the “Death March.” They saw beneath the raised canvas wall, two figures coming toward the tent from the door of the Dove Tavern, followed by a burst of drunken laughter. They swayed as they walked, and the first man, a civilian officer in black, but with the British insignia on his cocked hat,



leaned against a peach tree and looked toward the road, shading his eyes with his hands. The drum grew loud, and a fife could be heard over it; there was a column of dust far away on the Post Road.

Montresor's neat features had a look of distaste; he gestured to the drunken pair and spoke low. "Cunningham, the Provost Marshal . . . I detest the man! A petty tyrant and a bully, with a profane tongue and a weak head! I would give all to iron him . . . but he is a civilian, employed directly by the Ministry, and the army has no power over him."

"One of Georgie-porgie's bulldogs, is he?" said Beau.

"What is wrong with his face?" asked Timothy, unable to keep the revulsion from his voice. For the man was hideously scarred; even from this distance it showed grooved and crisscrossed, purplish-red.

"The Sons of Liberty did it," said Montresor. "Good work for once—the fellow had done to death a whole shipload of indentured servants. Kidnaped they were, and died of neglect and brutal treatment. That is his hangman with him—his catamite, too, they say, though none have caught the pair at it . . ." The other man, a huge black, grinned vacuously, his chin glistening with spittle; there was a thick rope which he wore looped over his shoulders like a scarf.

"I am no moralist," said Beau, "but it looks like a child, oversized."

"Thirteen, and a poor half-wit," said Montresor. "But His Majesty's executioner . . ." His face was unreadable.

As they watched, the Provost Marshal vomited upon the ground beside the peach tree, wiping his mouth on his sleeve afterward, while the grotesque hangman laughed, slapping his sides and uttering unintelligible noises. The Marshal, scowling purple, hit him across the face, a hard blow with the back of his hand; the hangman whimpered softly, like a whipped dog.

The marching strains were clear now, and they could see a small procession coming up the slope of the road. The drummer and fife player led, and scarlet-coats made a square, bayonets pointed toward the middle, where a prisoner walked, his hands bound behind him. At a whistled command from the peach tree, they turned off and came to a stop before the Marshal and his helper. At the rear came a cart with a rough pine coffin in it. The Marshal stepped up, stumbling a little, to the prisoner, and began cursing at him, the hangman gibbering and grinning behind. ". . . fucking whoreson spy!" he finished, and pointed to the ground where he stood. "Here's as good

a place as any to dig . . . I have baptized it! And the tree is sturdy enough for twenty foul spies to hang on!" The detachment in scarlet took spades and began to dig a hole beneath the peach tree, while one man marched to Montresor, saluting.

"Sergeant Stover, sir, reporting."

"Is that your prisoner, Sergeant!"

"No, sir. A rebel spy, sir, handed over from General Cornwallis' lines, up the road a piece. There wasn't no Sons of Liberty, sir . . . no one in that barn at all, sir."

"You did your best, Sergeant. Be dismissed . . . Wait!" He looked where the prisoner stood, watching the diggers. "Are they going to hang him without a trial?"

"General Cornwallis' orders, sir. They found it in his stocking . . . the evidence. Maps, papers, notes on our position, sir."

"I see," said Montresor, slowly. "Dismissed, Sergeant." He sketched a salute in the air, and turned back to Timothy and Beau, who had heard all the exchange.

Beau smiled. "Perhaps his maps are better than yours, my friend."

"It goes against the grain to see a fellow draftsman hanged," said Montresor. "There but for the grace of God . . ."

"I take your meaning, friend," drawled Beau. "And *you* take care! I should not like to lose you to the colonials' rope!"

Montresor made a sound in his throat, half laughter, and, turning, raised his voice. "Marshal Cunningham! Bring your prisoner here!"

The Marshal made an insolent face, but gestured to the hangman to follow with the prisoner, and ambled forward. The bound man, prodded and pulled, nearly lost his footing, but his face, seen close to, betrayed no feeling; he stood before them, younger than Timothy, tall, his face running with sweat, and his hair plastered wetly to his forehead. He wore a gray-brown suit, very plain, and thick white farmer's hose; a broad-brimmed round hat drooped wretchedly upon his head.

The prisoner's eyes were steady; they looked very blue in the dust that streaked his face. "I beg your indulgence, sir," he said. "I cannot uncover."

"Remove the prisoner's hat, hangman!"

The half-wit snatched off the hat and clapped it on his own head, over the ragged turban he wore; he grinned even more widely and, with one black hand, scratched his groin inside his trousers.

"Your name and rank, prisoner?"

"Nathan Hale, sir, captain in General Washington's Rangers."

"You are not in uniform, Captain Hale?"

"No, sir." The prisoner's eyes did not falter. "I am on an . . . unconventional service, sir."

"Mapmaking?" said Montresor, wryly. "My friend fears your maps are better than mine."

"No, sir, Captain Montresor . . . all the colonies are indebted to you for your chartings. . . . No, sir, and it is not my profession, sir."

"What is?" Montresor raised his brows.

"Schoolmaster, sir. There is proof of my calling in my pocket."

Montresor nodded to the hangman, who, scrabbling in the prisoner's pockets, with lewd looks, found a folded parchment.

"A diploma from Yale College," said Montresor, scanning it. "It looks to be genuine."

"It is, sir."

Montresor spoke casually, but his eyes searched the prisoner's face. "A shame you are not working for us . . . we could use a learned fellow or two. Offer you more, too. What do you say?"

"Thank you, sir, but no, sir."

"Not to—save your neck?"

"It is a neck like any other," said Hale. "Thank you, no, sir."

Something in the look of him, calm and shining, made them all uneasy. The Marshal cursed and spat, the hangman snickered, Beau mopped his face with the scented handkerchief, rolling it into a damp ball. "Damme," he cried, "the heat is monstrous! Can we not get back to your tent, Johnny?"

"Marshal," said Montresor, masking his aversion, "would it be permissible to allow the prisoner to wait in the shade while . . . the preparations are concluded?"

The Marshal looked ready to curse again, but after a moment nodded. "I'll get me another rum," he said. "Mind you keep good watch on him! Come, Blackie," he said, as to a dog, and the hangman, giggling, followed in the direction of the tavern.

Inside the tent, Beau collapsed showily onto the low camp bed, stretching his long legs in their silk hose; taking an ivory wig-scratcher from the ruffles at his sleeve, he poked delicately among the high-brushed waves above his brow. A fine dust of white powder puffed out. "Damnably close, this fashion, what?" Beau grimaced daintily. "I see you do not subscribe to it, Johnny," he said, eyeing Montresor's clubbed brown hair.

"A lice-catcher," said Montresor, curtly. "I leave such fashions to dandies and—"

"Players?" Beau looked amused.

"If you will," said Montresor. "We were ever at odds in small things."

"And great as well," said Beau steadily, looking at him straight for a moment, the ivory wig-scratcher poised, unmoving, in his hand. Timothy noticed the prisoner staring at Beau gravely, as though he saw beneath the foppish manner. Beau laughed then, breaking the long-held moment, and saying, "Great or small; it is all one now. Wars bore me, friend." He slipped the long, thin ivory back into his sleeve, raising his brows high. "But you were not always so remiss, Johnny . . . my mouth is devilish dry!"

"Forgive me," said Montresor. He stepped outside, clapping his hands for his orderly, who came running. "Bring wine"—he glanced at the prisoner—"and four glasses."

He poured it, sluggish, ruby red, into pewter cups.

"Upon my soul," cried Beau. "Port—in the morning!"

"Better than nothing," said Montresor, shortly.

"If you say so," said Beau. "Georgie-porgie does you less than well, say I." But he reached out for the cup.

Montresor handed a cup to Timothy, inclining his head, and turned to the prisoner. "Captain . . . Hales, is it?"

"Hale, sir. Nathan Hale. I would be grateful, but . . ." And he made a little movement backward with his head.

"Your hands! Oh . . . forgive me!" Montresor turned to Timothy. "Will you untie the prisoner's hands, sir?"

Hale stretched his cramped arms and rubbed his wrists, grimacing a little.

"Have a seat, sir." Montresor indicated a stool, and motioned Timothy to take another. He raised his cup. "Gentlemen . . . to the King!"

Hale shook his head. "I cannot drink to that toast, sir . . . and you can only hang me once."

"To Liberty!" Timothy's cheeks were scarlet, but his voice was steady.

"A fine toast," said Beau. "It can mean anything! To you, Johnny, it is Georgie-porgie and merrie England. To my young kinsman, his daughter's name. To me, the freedom to be myself. And to you, sir—" He looked at the prisoner, waiting.

Hale raised his glass, and said quietly, "It is the word for which I live . . . and die." And he drained the cup. "Sir, might I have pen



and paper? I must make report to my commanding officer—and inform my family. . . .”

“I give you leave,” said Montresor. “But make haste, sir. Cunningham is a foul oaf . . . he will brook no such courtesy.”

The prisoner wrote quickly, two letters, short; one was addressed to Lieutenant Colonel Knowlton, of Knowlton’s Rangers, and the other to Enoch Hale, Coventry, Connecticut. “My brother, sir.”

“I will post this through our own lines,” said Montresor, holding up the army report. “I cannot promise to get the other one through.”

“I will undertake to find a messenger,” said Beau, unexpectedly. “In New York there are many who will ride post for a shilling, even in these times.”

“There is one Hercules Mulligan,” said Hale. “A tailor. I have brought him much custom in my time. He owes me a favor.”

“I know the man,” said Beau, meeting Hale’s eye. “He has made a costume or two for us.” Timothy stared; he had never heard the name.

Hale turned quickly at the sound of heavy boots outside.

“Who untied the whoreson’s hands?” roared Cunningham. “I did,” replied Montresor, quietly. “I will take the responsibility.”

“It goes in my report!” shouted Cunningham, angrily.

“As you will, Marshal.”

“Tie him up again, Blackie!” Cunningham spat at Hale’s feet. “Your burying-hole’s ready, bitch’s brat! Strip him, Blackie!”

The hangman pulled off the prisoner’s coat and shirt, and slipped a shroudlike garment down over his head, jamming a white three-cornered hat on him, and binding up his wrists again, pulling them roughly behind his back. Cunningham then whistled up a guard, who led Hale across the stretch of ground to the peach-tree gallows; a low muffle of drums began.

The shallow hole gaped, the coffin open beside it; a thick rope hung, looped in a noose, and the cart below stood waiting. From all over the camp, soldiers came straggling to watch the hanging, though half as many again did not stir; such sights were routine in wartime. A few sleazy whores, camp-followers, giggled on the edge of the crowd.

The guards, taking Hale by the arms, pitched him forward onto the cart; he fell on his face. Hampered by his bound hands, he yet managed to struggle to his feet; there was blood on his chin, and the white gallows hat had fallen off. Timothy noticed for the first time

that his hair was the color of tow, or flax. The hangman jammed on the hat again, and fastened the noose around his neck.

"Speak up, whoreson!" shouted Cunningham. "Your last words before Hell!"

"A clergyman . . . ?"

"Pray to the Devil!" roared Cunningham.

Montresor stepped forward, close to the prisoner. "Captain Hale, do you have a last statement?"

The prisoner's lips moved; Montresor held up his hand for silence. The words came clear in the hush. ". . . what a pity it is . . . that we can die but once to serve our country." He spoke slowly, as if he were reading the words in the sky, his head lifted.

"Enough!" shouted Cunningham. "String him up!"

The hangman tied a cloth over Hale's eyes, jumped down from the cart, and signaled to the guards. They took the cart's shafts and quickly pulled it forward from under Hale's feet. The drums beat loudly; Timothy closed his eyes.

"It is over," said Beau, beside him, with a new gentleness. The body swung slowly, in an arc.

Timothy did not remember making their farewells; he was feeling very ill. Some miles toward home, on the Post Road, and a good deal lighter in the stomach (for the port had come quickly up), he said, shakily, "I have never seen a hanging before."

"No?" said Beau. "They are a penny a dozen any day in London."

They rode on, another mile, in silence.

"It was dreadful, of course," said Timothy. "But . . . inspiring."

"Oh?" said Beau, in a light tone. "How so?"

"Those words," said Timothy. "Hale's last words . . ."

"A quotation from Horace," said Beau. "Cato's words to his son . . . a passable translation." He smiled a little. "Hale was a school-master, after all."

## Chapter 15

"But those Roman togas are so easy!" cried Miranda. "Just sheets! Almost no expense at all, and I thought you liked authentic costuming!"

"Modern dress is even easier," said Beau, "and much more interesting, in this case. There are a dozen stage-struck British officers who are perishing to walk on in a production! What better? We shall have all our bit parts and supernumeraries. In fact, they may even pay for the privilege. And their uniforms thrown in!"

"You are thinking of a modern parallel to *Julius Caesar*?" said Michael. "Is it not dangerous?"

"What is life without its spice?" cried Beau. "Besides, as you well know, there is no true parallel. Where is a conspiracy here in New York Town? And if one is abrewing, it will scarcely inflame our Tory audience!" For now, months into the occupation, theater attendance was strictly curtailed; only those bearing passes from the British authorities were admitted.

A production of *Julius Caesar* was contemplated; the play had never been shown in New York and, with its political overtones, was certainly timely. It had many strong scenes and fine, lofty speeches that actors love; there had been no opposition except in this matter of costuming.

"I think Beau is right, you know, darling," said Michael, after a moment. "Who among our amateurs of the garrison can wear a toga with grace? And the uniforms will look striking."

"You will take Brutus, of course," said Beau. "A wonderful part for you. And Marc Antony will suit Timothy perfectly. . . . I think we must borrow a naval captain's outfit—Antony had ship commands."

"But what will you play?" said Timothy. "Those are the best roles."

"Caesar, of course! He dies early and is out of the way. I shall have all the more opportunity for stage direction. And you, my dear—" he turned to Miranda—"you need not do the Calpurnia bit at all, but it is so easy for you . . . and you can dress the part richly. They will like to see you in it . . . or would you rather do Portia? She is wife to Brutus. Perhaps that would be rather clever—onstage and off, you know!"

"It is all one to me," said Miranda. "They are both dreadful sticks. I hate these audiences anyway!" She was rather cross for once; she was missing her cheap-seat women, with their ready tears and laughter.

"Cheer up, my dear," said Beau. "The rest will do you good . . . and give you time to work up your Medea. The officers' ladies will love Euripides—they will think they are being educated!"

Miranda smiled, in spite of herself, and said, thoughtfully, "Portia

has even fewer lines, and it is a neat point—the husband-and-wife angle—and I do think Calpurnia should be more portly.” Unconsciously, she stretched her neck a little, making herself taller and more delicately slender.

Beau nodded. “As you wish, my dear. And now to work! Let us just read through the lines. . . .”

The Malones’ theater in Nassau Street was now the sole source of professional entertainment in New York. David Douglas’ fortunes had been ruined by the fire, which had destroyed his John Street Theatre, and he had sold his working manuscripts, his scenery plans, and, it was rumored, two of his leading actresses to the British army, and had made his way, with the remnant of his company, to Charleston. The British had rebuilt the John Street house, with a minuscule stage and balcony, and were enthusiastically putting on those rather nasty farces for which Douglas had been famous. Beau swore it was true that the actresses had been sold to recoup Douglas’ losses, and for sure a brace of doxies lent their talents to every production, singing and dancing in scanty costumes. The theater was not much patronized, however, except by the younger officers and the brothel girls. Miranda and Charity saw eye to eye over this; neither of them would even walk past the place! It was painted a shiny red and was the shape of a square box; Miranda called it an eyesore and a disgrace, and Charity petitioned Lord Howe over the riffraff which lounged and cat-called in front of it, “putting in hazard,” as she wrote, “the morals of the female population.”

After the read-through, it being still early, Beau attired himself in his second-best wig, only a half-foot in height, rubbed a tiny smear of rouge onto his cheeks, hung his squirrel-lined cloak negligently across his shoulders (spring being late that year), and sauntered down toward Queen Street. He was sure-footed as a mountain goat on the slippery cobbles, even in his fashionable heeled boots; his acrobatic training in the comedy stood him in good stead on these carelessly paved streets. It had rained hard the night before, and the grass verge was all mud and sewage. There were few pedestrians except for the soldiers who patrolled every crossway; the ordinances against loitering were strict; folk no longer gathered in friendly talk, but plodded purposefully onward, looking busy. A brewer’s cart rolled past, heavy as cannon, its yoked drays sending up great clods of black mud. Beau cursed cheerfully at his dirtied boots; the driver answered him in kind, oaths of the London slum world, the crafty Cockney face splitting in a grin at the homely sound. An urchin flung a clod;



it fell short, and the driver's whip cracked swiftly where heels vanished up an alleyway. Beau laughed aloud, and the driver pulled at his cap, raising the whip in a rough salute.

Beau turned into Queen Street; at number 23 a small coach stood, under the scissors-and-thimble sign which read: *Clothier—London Tailoring. H. Mulligan.* A pair of Hessian lobster-backs guarded front and rear, and a gold crest blazed on the door; Beau recognized it: Lord Cornwallis'. In a moment the General came out of the tailor's shop, followed by another Hessian. Cornwallis was short and square, high-colored, with a mouth like a trap.

He peered short-sightedly at Beau. "Do I know you, sir? . . . Drat these eyes! Trod on me spectacles this morning—won't have them back for a fortnight. Don't want to offend, what?"

"No offense, Your Excellency . . . but perhaps you recall—we met last week at Mrs. Loring's. . . ."

Cornwallis chuckled, the trap mouth taking a sly curve. "Nice armful that, what? But Howe has the inside track, what?" He chuckled again. "What did you say your name was?"

"Savage, Your Excellency. Beau Savage, of the London Savages. . . ."

"Ah, the stage fellow! Yes, yes. . . . Well, what are you up to now, eh? Another *Stratagem*? Funny fellow, what?"

"We'll have another session with the bard," said Beau. "Shakespeare, what?"

"Ah, Juliet, yes. Wife had a good cry, what . . . ? Fine figure of a woman, Juliet. Mrs. Malone, a beauty, that. . . . Had me spectacles then, of course."

"We plan a production of *Julius Caesar*."

Cornwallis looked blank for a moment. "Ah, yes, Caesar. . . . Roman fellow, what? Battles, what?" He tapped his forehead. "Good thinking, that. Army and all, what? Clever fellow. Happy to give advice—battles and what, y'know . . . happy. . . ."

"That's handsome of you, Your Excellency. There are no battles in the play, but perhaps other military consultation . . . I may take you up on it, what?"

"Happy, my man, happy. . . . Well, good luck, what? Look forward to it. Almost like London, 'twill be, what? . . . Good day, sir." He turned back, peering again into Beau's eyes. "Suitable for the wife, I suppose? Not too many battles, what?"

"No, no battles."

"Well, that's all right, then. . . . Good day, then." And, sketching

a salute, he stepped into his coach, barked an order, and was driven off.

Beau looked after him, smiled, and opened the tailor-shop door. A bell above it jingled, and Mulligan appeared, in his black fustian apron with pins stuck in it, and a long measuring-tape around his neck.

"Savage, my boy! Come in, do!" Hercules Mulligan looked more like a jolly brewer than a tailor. He was as tall as Beau, above the common height, but built like a beer barrel, sturdy and solid. He had small, laughing eyes, sunk into his head like raisins in dough, a round face with two chins, and an expression of unlikely honesty. "He is too good to be true," thought Beau, the professional, "and yet it works. . . ."

For Mulligan was the foremost of Washington's agents, a leading member of the notorious Culper Ring. There was an enormously high price on his head, but, though he had been jailed twice, his identity had never been discovered, and each time he had been set free. One of the first Libertarians, he had been the ringleader in the burning of the statue of King George, almost ten years ago; he had been arrested then, but nothing could be proved against him except his ardent Irish blood. He had been at large now for a long while, and had built his tailoring business into the most lucrative in the city, serving all the wealthiest Tories and highest-placed British officers. He was in a position to overhear much valuable information, and was easily placed to pass it on as well, by word of mouth or even by written messages, smuggled out in linings, or sewn into the facings of finished garments. He was an invaluable asset to the cause of Liberty; he was also by far the finest tailor in New York.

"My friend!" cried Beau, embracing him and kissing him on both cheeks in the French fashion. "I see you have had a visit from the Cornish trap!"

"Oh, ay!" said Mulligan, his eyes disappearing altogether and his chins shaking. "His sight being scant this morn, the trap is sprung. . . . I never heard his Lordship talk so much." He stopped laughing and laid a finger to the side of his nose, looking crafty. "You will need a long sheet of paper . . . 'twill take some stitching, too, I think." He broke off as the bell jingled again. A half-grown black boy in blue livery minced in, looking important. "Squire Gaylord's britches, sah. . . . Squire says is they ready, sah?"

"In the back room, Titus. . . ." They waited, silently, as the boy

emerged, whistling, balancing a large white box on his head. The bell jingled again.

"One of them Jamaica niggers," said Mulligan.

"Titus? A Roman name?"

"Those Jamaica squires give themselves all kinds of airs," said Mulligan. "Pay their bills in Latin and Greek if they could."

"A coincidence," said Beau, smiling. "For our Caesar play . . ."

"Ah, yes, my boy. But you'll not be wanting Roman dress, you said.

"Right," said Beau. "We'll borrow British uniforms for all the bit parts and some of the others, but there will still be a good few costumes to make."

"Fine," said Mulligan, taking a sheet of paper and a stub of lead from his pocket. "We can use code, then . . . inches, feet, and yards, you remember?"

"How could I forget?" said Beau, laughing wryly. "I sweated fair the last time—when it fell into Montresor's hands. He's a clever fellow, you know. No Cornwallis he . . ."

"'Tis the safest of codes," said Mulligan, nodding sagely. "For 'tis my own. Trust me, my boy. . . ." He spread out the paper on a small worktable and sat before it, pencil poised. "And never fear . . . your Montresor is posted up country. There is no danger."

They sat together, an unlikely pair, bent over the table and the paper. They spoke low, but no one came in or out of the shop for nearly an hour. Both sides of the paper were filled before the front-door bell sounded again. Mulligan rose as two junior officers, fresh-faced, entered, on a sudden gust of wind that threw the door wide.

"Lumme, tailor man, if 'twere not for the collation tonight, you'd not find me here at all. This wind has like to been the ruin of my wig! I shall have to stop at the wigmaker's. But Mulligan, m'dear," said the more exquisite of the two, drawling, "you have made this waistcoat too tight! I shall belch in Milady's face! Be a dear darling, do . . . let it out a wee bit. . . ."

"Of a certainty, fair gentlemen . . . it will take a moment only," said Mulligan, with an unctuous smirk that made Beau's blood run cold. "If you will but step in this closet, gentlemen . . ." He turned to Beau. "Mr. Savage, sir, pray wait on me. I shall be with you in a few minutes." His tiny right eye managed a wink. "You have the measurements and yardages and the price estimates . . . you can add them up and take them along at your leisure. . . ."

And so Beau listened, for a good many more minutes than Mulli-

gan promised; through the thin walls of the closet's partition, he heard a snatch here, a snatch there, all pertaining, in some sort or another, to the army's movements. In those more naïve days, lips were not buttoned tight on threat of demotion, and the ears of the walls often burned. He jotted busily; the innocent, meaningless numbers filled the page, into the margins. He folded the paper small, and pushed it carefully out of sight under the band of his wig. Then quickly he drew another paper to him and filled it with other, larger scrawls and flourishes. The two uniformed exquisites emerged from the closet, with Mulligan bowing low behind. "You have saved my life, to say nothing of my love life, dear man!" cried the officer in his let-out waistcoat. "I shall be eternally grateful! Send me the bill. . . . Ta-ta, now!" And they were gone.

The two spies looked at one another. Beau spoke first. "I have the finger cramp . . . dear man!" He raised a mocking brow. "Wearisome fellow, that!"

"I would suffer ten such fellows, for the cause of Liberty." Mulligan's Irish voice was hoarse with emotion.

Beau shot him a keen glance. "Spare me the incantations, friend! Your Sam Adams is not listening—nor your General Washington either! You look like a thief protesting his innocence. Who knows why we do it, you and I! We are alien fruit here and no patriots. . . . For fun, perhaps!" He brightened. "Fun, yes . . . that is the answer! Irish and actor folk . . . they never grow up!" He rose, holding out a languid hand. "Farewell, friend Hercules, until—" He broke off. "Did you know you bear the same name as my first ancestor, the fifth Harry's beloved Fool? Sir Hercules Savage he was, and very famous in those days, long ago. Knighted on the field at Agincourt! I have never heard the name else. . . ."

"Nor I," said Mulligan. "In my family, too, it is very old. He who bore it was a famous warrior, and French, too, so my mother said." He began to laugh, his little eyes slitting smaller with it. "Could it be . . . ?"

"Could it be we are kinsmen, we two? Why not? We are kinsmen of the heart and soul, for sure . . . companions in a dangerous game! Farewell, newfound kinsman! And—take care!"



## Chapter 16

Beau had been drawn into espionage purely by accident; it was so long ago now that he had almost forgotten how it began. Weeks before the British occupation, and before the hanging of Nathan Hale, Beau had grown into one of Washington's cleverest agents.

Nathan Hale's end had affected him far more than he would have admitted, even to himself; players are incorrigible sentimentalists, and, also, somewhere deep inside, Beau identified the valiant young schoolmaster with his legendary namesake who had met the same sad end. He often thought of these two martyrs, and had accepted, shrugging, the likelihood that he would someday meet with the same fate. He had known nothing in all his life but play-acting; insouciant comedy and high tragedy were the stuff upon which he fed; like a vampire, he was not as other folk.

Months before, during the brief time Washington's forces held the city, there had come a soft rapping at the door of the Murray Street house; the knocking had a rhythm, the signal of the Sons of Liberty; he had heard Timothy practicing it in his room. Beau was alone; it was full dark, and the others were all at the theater, Beau's understudy as well, while the actor nursed an inflamed throat. Beau hurried to answer the knock before it should wake the tyrant Cook. A face, inexpertly stained with the juice of walnut and Indian-streaked with red, showed frightened and furtive in the light of the candle Beau held.

A voice croaked from the night's shadows, "Life, liberty, and . . ."  
". . . the pursuit of happiness," answered Beau. The phrase had been newly adopted by the Libertarians, a sentence from the recent declaration of the colonies' independence from England, not yet signed or official. None but the initiate could be expected to know it; Beau had heard it once from the excited lips of young Timothy, and his actor's trained memory had done the rest. It proved to be indeed the password to the secret life that now he led. Meant for Timothy, the message, on a scrap of smudged wrapping-paper, was handed, without another word, to the wrong Savage, and the thinly disguised Son of Liberty disappeared into the moonless depths of

Murray Street. Beau held the paper to the light; words were printed on it in the block letters a child first learns; they read like nonsense. Even as he began to crumple it, disgusted, a phrase, repeated, caught his eye. He studied it for a moment, his agile mind darting like a swallow; it was in code, a code so simple and transparent that his breath caught in wonder. He shook his head in pity for these zealous simpletons. And so it was he was caught, and passed the message on, and made, quite soon, codes of his own, unbreakable. "Caught in the web of my own vanity"—so he chastised himself later. Once caught, the excitement and the secrecy, the intrigue and the romance, held him fast. Not even to himself would he have admitted that the high-sounding phrases of the earnest patriots had found a home in his heart.

Not least of Beau's assets for this avocation was his reputation for foppish frivolity; who could have believed that the greatest dandy in New York City was not a thoroughgoing Tory? Certainly not those lords and ladies, those generals and perfumed doxies who played host to this delightful will-o'-the-wisp, this wasp-tongued, mocking, mercurial Mercutio.

As for Timothy, he brooded and languished that he had been passed by, while Beau thanked all the powers that be that he had saved his dearest Miranda's son from sure destruction. For Beau, consummate, loving liar, had adored the beautiful actress since he had first laid eyes on her, more than twenty years ago. "Age cannot wither, or custom stale her infinite variety," he whispered to himself in his shaving-mirror, and laughed at his moon-calf image. He paused then, arrested by a thought, razor poised in his hand. Why not *Antony and Cleopatra*? After the *Julius Caesar* it was a natural follow-up—why not? A great role for Miranda; he remembered that she had made her dramatic debut with Garrick in the tiny part of Octavia in the same play. She would welcome the chance to star in it now, for actors thrived on such petty and harmless revenges of the spirit. He continued mapping out the new idea in his mind as he walked down to the theater, swinging his gold-knobbed walking-stick. He pictured Michael as Antony; his handsome slackness and spurious youth would lend beautiful credence to that fallen Roman god. He himself would follow his Julius Caesar with another Caesar, the young thin-lipped conqueror Octavius. He smiled to himself as well, thinking of the secret and dangerous interpretation he had planned for the Julius role. He turned in at the little cul-de-sac that marked the entrance to the Nassau Street theater.

Beau's fellow actors exchanged startled looks as the scenes with Caesar progressed; was this, then, to be another *Hamlet*? The role, in Beau's hands, was strangely slanted; his Caesar spoke in a grating whisper, rich with phlegm, held his head stiffly, and seemed to creak at each movement; the eyes appeared curiously hooded, like a snake's, and the lips fell slack; the gait Beau adopted managed to suggest the walk of a man suffering from an excess of weight, though the actor was as thin as a weed. Miranda, uncomfortable, opened her mouth to speak. Michael pressed her hand. "Let him be, darling!" he hissed. "Trust Beau . . . have you ever seen him give a bad performance?" His cue came; he rushed on, prop dagger upraised. When next he spoke to Miranda, after his scene, he said, rubbing his chin, "I believe I have figured it out. This is a sketch Beau is trying out—an exaggeration of an ailing dictator. Do you not see it?" But Miranda shook her head.

She was quite right; there was no suggestion of illness or weakness in Beau's performance; it was merely another, and very odd, view of the conqueror of all Gaul. If anything, rehearsals deepened and delineated this characterization. "Well, my dear," said Michael, laughing a little, "at any rate, it is not a long part . . . he cannot make the production fail."

Indeed, Beau's direction of all the other parts was faultless; he kept the characters within their conventional frame, and allowed no upstaging or lint-picking or waving of handkerchiefs; the crowd scenes were brilliant, as carefully worked out as if they had been part of a dance, and the noises and shouting had, as well, an orchestrated pattern. But it was not until the dress rehearsal that Beau's intentions became plain.

"My God!" cried Miranda, with a shocked face. "He will ruin us all!"

"I think not," said Michael, quietly, a smile playing about his lips. "You underestimate the British character."

For Beau's Caesar was King George III to the life. There was the rolling gait, incipient with gout, the rounded stomach, corset-confined, the weak, barnyard face. Mulligan had fitted him with a padded coat and breeches round as sausages, from which Beau's legs emerged skinny as sticks, looking bowed. The wig was perfect, copied from the portraits; Beau had stuffed his cheeks with cotton wool, making jowls, on which he had painted a careful tracery of red veins. The drooping lids, the high haughtiness of brows were easy, and a stiff upstanding collar hid Beau's graceful throat; the small

hands twinkled eloquently as stars, the finishing touch; it was perfect. As for the rest, Beau had procured from Mulligan some dozen of those round red Liberty caps, outlawed now, which he handed round to the actors who played the conspirators. "Oh, no!" cried Michael. "You cannot! I will go along with the gamble of the King, but this will never pass! Let us not push our luck!" And he was adamant, though Timothy, onstage, and Charity, watching from the audience, lent their pleas to Beau's. "Artists do not take sides!" said Michael.

Beau raised his blank Georgian eyes. "No doubt you are right," he said, without rancor.

On opening night the house was packed; so much satin and lace, so many gold epaulets, such towering headpieces had seldom been seen in one place. The young subalterns who swelled the ranks of supernumeraries on the stage must have let something slip, for the atmosphere in the audience was charged and expectant; there was no first-night rustling, no chatter, no clearing of throats; no latecomers drowned out the initial speeches; the hush was profound and flattering.

The first scene progressed without incident; the actors spoke well and clearly; the exposition of the plot, always a bit dull, went on. After a few moments, the audience, a trifle disappointed, was lulled back into its tapping feet, its whisperings; another scene droned to its end. The first entrance of Caesar-George produced a shock so profound it was almost felt on the stage; the silence was loud. Beau shambled forward gracelessly, waved a languid, dimpled hand, spoke a few wheezing words; the silence broke. The Tory audience, shocked and delighted, stopped the show. The laughter, the shouting, the clapping and stamping went on for a full minute. The play was the hit of ten seasons.

Even Beau had not quite expected this reaction; he had gambled that it would pass muster, surely, "for the British have a famous sense of humor," he said, speaking as though he had never been British himself. "And then of course no king was ever so thoroughly detested by his subjects as this poor George. He is a Hanover, he is fat, he is a fool . . . which has probably saved him, in truth. English kings have lost their heads before now," he added, darkly. "But no one beheads a buffoon."

"They should!" cried Charity. "He is the cause of all!"

"My dear girl," drawled Beau, "there is no justice in this world—did you not know?"



"You think that!" Charity was aghast.

"I am counting on it," said Beau, with a cryptic smile, crossing his fingers behind his back.

*Julius Caesar*, with its military theme, its crisp modern dress, its provocative undertones, and, above all, its scathing portrait of a contemporary tyrant, might have run a year. But Beau wearied of his own performance, which was never more than a caricature, and Miranda chafed nightly under the chains of an underwritten role; they decided to close *Caesar*. Rome and its tangled politics had ceased to intrigue Beau, so with some reluctance he decided against the *Antony and Cleopatra*, which might have been a sure thing. Miranda, who had been privately studying *Medea*, made a tentative suggestion that they might attempt that play. "It is chancy," said Beau, but with a light in his eyes. "But there will never be a better time, now that we have, for once, money to spare. Let's do it!" He laughed. "Our snobbish audience will come . . . even if they do not like it. Let's do it!" And so they took fire, as actors will.

Their acting version was awkward and stilted, in poor blank verse; little of Euripides' passion and terror survived. Miranda, however, had her own passion and terror to bring to the role; with these she vanquished the ineptitude and vulgarity of the impoverished words. At rehearsal, the watching actors' faces streamed with tears, and even the aisle-sweepers gaped in awe and shuddered with dread.

There was no scenery, and the stage was lit with streaming torches, carried by the chorus, who formed a constantly varying pattern of movement, light, and sound. All the actors wore robes, classically draped, in colors to bring out the changing drama as it went forward. Flutes and strings accompanied the voices of the chorus, but softly, so as not to detract. "I am not satisfied with the music," said Beau, who had composed it. "But it will do—for a start." He had cast Michael as the faithless Jason; the part gave him, never the most subtle of actors, great difficulty. "I feel I am not right for it," he said, with worried looks. "I cannot see his forsaking this woman. I cannot understand the man. . . ."

"Remember," said Beau, patiently, "that Jason does not consider he is mistreating her. To him she was always a foreigner, not a Greek. He feels she is not truly human—as white people feel about Negroes, bear that in mind. . . . Also, first and foremost, Jason is an opportunist—his eye is always on the main chance. Do you see now?" Michael nodded, but a line was forming between his eyebrows and his face had a grim look. "But keep the fellow charming . . . re-

member, Medea loves him! The new queen loves him. It is his only saving grace—you must play it for that.”

Beau had cast himself as leader of the chorus, doubling as well in the small part of Theseus of Athens; Timothy had no part at all, and work devolved almost entirely on these three experienced performers. It looked as though it might be an unprecedented masterpiece of production and acting; they worked very hard, rehearsing all day long in costume, for the antique robes must feel comfortable and move well.

It was on one such rehearsal day, late in the afternoon, that British soldiers came to search the theater. Beau never learned who had made the accusation; it might have been one of a dozen in a chain of informers, or it might have been wrenched in agony from some poor wretch put to the question. “Thank God Timothy is safe at home!” whispered Miranda. For more and more often members of the Sons of Liberty, innocent of all but free thought, had been arrested out of hand as the war worsened.

Beau, who alone knew they had not come for Timothy, watched as soldiers took up their posts in the corners of the empty auditorium and orders were barked out to the actors to stay where they were, on the stage. Only the three principals were present, with a prompter, a wretched apprentice barely out of his teens, so terrified that he dropped the prompt book, scattering the papers. Quickly a soldier seized upon them, making the actors stand immobile while each page of verse, well-nigh incomprehensible with its mysterious stage markings, was scanned. Finding nothing, the enemy captain gave orders to search the actors themselves.

Miranda drew herself up; she looked seven feet tall. “Lord Cornwallis shall hear of this, sirrah! Do you dare to lay a finger on a lady . . . a subject of His Majesty?”

They had dared by now to do a great deal more; a number of female spies had been apprehended in the last months. But the captain was no braver than any other; this goddesslike creature in her outlandish robes, with her glittering eyes fixed upon him, and each snakelike loosened lock of her wild priestess hair seeming to curl toward him, unmanned him altogether. “Yes, ma’am,” he said. “I mean, no, ma’am. I mean—if you will swear . . .”

“Swear, sirrah? To whom should I swear? There is nothing hidden upon my person. You have my word; it is enough.” Her voice, though she pitched it low, reverberated like Juno’s in his ears; they grew red. He fidgeted, and slapped his white gloves together. “Well,

well," he faltered, "it will suffice . . . it will suffice." He fiddled with some papers, snapped out an order, and withdrew a few paces, preserving the rags of his dignity. Beau, in his peril, could not suppress the wintry smile that twitched briefly at his lips.

"I request leave to withdraw," said Miranda, in her voice of muted thunder. The captain nodded. Beau, standing beside her, hissed quickly, "My wig . . . destroy it!" Then he raised his arms in their flowing robes as the soldier came to prod at the folds.

They found nothing at all in the dressing-rooms except some lampblack which was used for lining the eyes, and a scrap of grocery list, dropped by Charity, weeks old. These things they confiscated, along with Beau, who was led, manacled, and still in his Greek robes, off to the Provost's Jail. "Later—your clothes will be brought to you later," snarled the captain, out of Miranda's range.

The lampblack did not make good ink, and they could not break the code of the grocery list. Beau did not break, either, though they questioned him for three days and nights. On the fourth day, visitors were admitted, one at a time.

Beau, wearing the change of clothes that Michael, his first visitor, had brought, greeted Miranda with something of his usual mocking lightness, though his eyes were rimmed with red and seemed to be deeper in their sockets; there was an ugly bruise at his temple and a shallow scar snaking up to his chin from somewhere under his neck-cloth.

Miranda, shocked, whispered, "You look . . . thinner. . . ."

He laughed, a brief, harsh sound. "In three days? No . . . I have not had much sleep. Even if they had allowed it . . ." He gestured to the straw of his pallet, shrugging. "It is alive." The cell was filthy and smelled sour, catching in the throat. "I had a cellmate the first night—there, in that corner. He never spoke or moved. They carried him out in the morning, along with his bed, and scrubbed the corner down afterward. Perhaps he was already dead." They heard the hollow clang of nailed boots on the stone floor; a guard passed outside the cell door, shouldering a rifle; Beau saluted smartly, with a crooked grin. The guard passed out of sight, but the boots sounded still, a ragged rhythm, in the corridor.

Miranda, whispering, put the basket she carried into his hands. "Do you have enough to eat? Charity sent these."

"True to her name, your daughter-in-law. A good lass, Mother Malone." He nodded sagely, with a pious look to heaven.

Miranda smiled. "Oh, Beau—how can you joke?"

"It is easier than weeping," he said. He leaned forward then, pressing her hand hard so that she winced. "The wig?" He spoke very low, his eyes on the barred door.

"Safe," she answered. "I hid it under my corset."

He let out his breath, laughing. "I had not known you wore one."

"It is very thin," she said, tossing her head a little, "and not boned—" She saw his eyes and broke off. "Oh, Beau! Do be serious!"

He stopped smiling and asked, bending close, "Where is it now?"

"Back in your dressing-room, where I found it."

He stared, a little leap of fear in his eyes.

She looked at him hard for a moment. "I burned it—the paper."

He breathed again, smiling a little, "Oh, good girl . . ."

"Beau—what was it? It read like nonsense."

He shrugged. "Perhaps it is. I am like to think so now, I may tell you, after these days. . . . But—you are sure it is destroyed?"

"Even the ashes, I promise you." She took his hand, looking intently at him. "Beau, it was—really dangerous, the paper?"

He nodded, grim. "It would have hanged me. Now—well . . ." And he gave another great shrug.

"Beau," she whispered, "will they let you go now?"

"Oh, no," he said, shaking his head. "They will not let me go free . . . but—there is no real evidence, only an unproved accusation. They will have to keep me locked up somewhere. Not here—this is too nice for traitors." He smiled a little at her stricken look. "Do you pray? Pray a little prayer for me." He dropped his voice again, very low. "Listen, Miranda. When they move me from here, go to James Rivington, at *The Gazette*—"

"The editor? But he's a dreadful Tory!"

"Sh-h-h." Beau put his fingers to his lips. "Go to his office. Say you want to inquire the price of an ad of eleven lines. He will say you must pay the minimum for seventeen lines. You will agree and give him a piece of paper with my name on it. He will give you another with the name of the prison where they have taken me. You will destroy both papers afterward. Do you understand?"

She nodded; tears had sprung, stinging, to her eyes. "Oh, Beau," she whispered, "why did you do it?"

His eyes were very bright; he smiled whitely and spread his hands in a rueful gesture. "My dear—only God knows. . . ."



## Chapter 17

The British closed down the theater at the end of the week; the written order was very stern and official, in thick black ink which stained the hands, and with a great number of seals dangling from it. It said, in brief, that the order held for the duration of the war and that there would be no appealing it.

There was no appealing Beau's fate either; he was taken to the *Jersey*, a prison ship in Wallabout Bay, also for the duration.

"Oh, God, Mother," cried Timothy, softly, "he will not last three months! No one ever has!"

Charity began to cry; the twins, who had never in their lives seen a grownup weep, looked terrified, and little Marie, a mimic, set up a wail of her own. "They want their supper," sobbed Charity, mopping her eyes. "Come, children."

The *Jersey* was the oldest of the five prison ships in the bay, a waterlogged hulk which had never been more than a fourth-rate warship. All the city knew this notorious vessel, having seen it for years now, rotting in the harbor, stripped of masts, rigging, and guns, and covered with slime; already it bore the nickname "Hell." Horror stories of the conditions abounded, told in whispers wherever patriots met. Over a thousand prisoners were penned below deck, in unbelievable squalor and degradation. They lived ankle deep in refuse and excrement, never cleaned out; hatches were battened down at night and portholes closed, against escape attempts, and the poor creatures gasped for the stifling and nauseous air, no better than poison.

Timothy had read a smuggled-out letter from one of the prisoners held there; haltingly he recalled it, his eyes sick. "'We bury six to eleven men a day,' the letter read. 'We have at least two hundred sick, and there are none who are well. Every morning the guards call, 'Rebels! Turn out your dead!' Often some go mad, nearly every day, and those are turned overside to drown, with the corpses. . . .'" They heard it all with sinking hearts, for many folk had seen the corpses in the hundreds, like skeletons with bloat, washed up on the mud flats; when the wind was right, you could smell them, mingled with salt and sea.

Knowing its futility, they yet attempted to obtain word of Beau's condition, if not to change it. They were received nowhere; Lord and Lady Cornwallis did not answer the imploring letters they sent every week; Mrs. Loring, Lord Howe's mistress, who had so often fawned upon Miranda, simply stared through her when approached; even James Rivington, who had supplied the first information, refused to face their questions. "Mother," said Timothy, "Rivington is a double agent—you will get nothing from him! He is in the pay of both sides . . . the worst sort of scoundrel!"

"Perhaps then," said Miranda, "it was a lie . . . what first he told me."

"I think not," said Michael, shaking his head sadly. "Rivington could not dare speak or even acknowledge us. Look at the coded manner in which he gave the prison's name!"

"Sir," said Timothy, "there is a Captain Montresor. I thought they seemed friends, he and Beau . . . even rather close. I met the man once. Perhaps a letter? He has the title of Chief Engineer of His Majesty's Forces."

This time the answer came quite promptly. Montresor wrote that indeed Beau was held on the warship *Jersey*; the charge was "suspicion of treason." ". . . there is little I can do for his release, as the authorities are making no exceptions. I might suggest, however, that if anyone knows of another traitor, whose name might be given in exchange, a suspension of sentence could possibly be contrived. I have this on the highest authority. Be assured the information will be kept secret. . . ."

"This is infamous!" cried Timothy. "As much as asking us to hand over an innocent person! I warrant that is how Beau was accused . . . some poor devil hoping for clemency . . ."

"Perhaps," said Miranda, sadly. "Still—Beau never denied it."

The weeks and months—even the years—went by; Beau was not forgotten, but bit by bit the memories numbed. Less and less often did eyes meet at some sudden recollection, and a stray word ceased to call up his mocking face. They spoke his name seldom, to spare the children, who had been told Uncle Beau was away on a visit; after a time they almost believed it themselves.

The closing of the theater had left them in an idleness they had never known before; Miranda grew pale and listless, and was reduced to puttering about in the kitchen, trailing an untidy velvet morning gown, and stirring up unwholesome-looking messes which no one ate. It could not last, of course, for there was no food to spare for it;

the blockade was tightening around the beleaguered city, and lines formed every day in the market.

The John Street Theatre was still in dubious operation; the army put on a play every other month or so, poor, mawkish things with nothing to recommend them. Michael and Miranda gave short readings from Shakespeare there, by invitation, feeling it kept their technique from rusting altogether. Indeed, they argued more fiercely over these scraps of drama than they had ever done while engaged in the most intricate production. Still, for them, as for the rest of the citizens, money was short, and what there was bought little. A length of cloth cost a small fortune; neither woman had had a new dress for over two years, and Charity cut down their old garments to fit the children. Firewood and even coal were in short supply and very costly; sometimes they did not light a fire till Christmas, going about in cloaks and mufflers and heaping the beds with furs. They had no help; Cook had succumbed, finally, to an astronomical bribe from Mrs. Loring, and was queening it in the kitchen of the Howe mansion, accumulating a fortune. The little kitchen maid had grown into a buxom armful and run away to be a barracks doxy. "I am surprised at her spirit," said Michael, thoughtfully. "Perhaps she might have been stage material." "No need for regrets," answered Miranda with some bitterness, "we have no stage."

News was extremely scanty; the city was virtually ringed in by a wall of silence. Even ordinary citizens feared to foregather, and the actors, always insular in their lives, bore also the onus of Beau's arrest; they had no friends. The decisive Battle of Yorktown was a week old before they heard of it; they broke out a last bottle of sherry to celebrate, for it was a resounding rebel victory. "The war will be over soon now," said Timothy, his face shining. "Liberty will prevail!" They raised their glasses; Miranda thought of Beau, swallowing tears with the wine.

French volunteers, themselves bemused by Liberty's bright sun, swelled the rebel ranks, under the command of Lafayette; slowly the tide of American victory rolled in. Fresh British troops under Clinton and a formidable navy under Admiral Graves struggled valiantly, but the fall of Yorktown and Cornwallis' surrender there pointed to the end. Cornwallis, accompanied by the traitor Benedict Arnold, sailed for England; Sir Henry Clinton's brief tenure as Commander-in-Chief was cut short in May of 1782, when a frantic Parliament recalled him. He was replaced by Sir Guy Carleton, a veteran of the

French-Indian wars, who was given the title as well of Commissioner for Peace.

All over the colonies there was rejoicing, for loyalists and rebels alike suffered privations; Washington's army, though victory was in sight, was in dreadful case, ill-equipped, ragged, and almost starving; it was believed his soldiers could not survive another winter of war. A provisional armistice was signed in November, but negotiations for an actual peace dragged on with slow agony all through the winter and into the spring. Benjamin Franklin haggled endlessly with British envoys in Paris, saying, "They are unable to carry on the war, and too proud to make peace." For the complete recognition of America as a separate and equal nation was a hard lump for the British Parliament to swallow.

Early in April a British packet, *Prince William Henry*, brought a royal proclamation declaring a formal end of hostilities. The Continental Congress in Philadelphia concurred, with the ringing of the huge Liberty Bell. Still, the treaty was not actually signed, and soldiers from both sides, sick of the delay, began to desert. Washington wisely did not attempt to hold his men in the ranks, but, with Congress' permission, granted furloughs to all who wanted them; throughout the summer, small units and stragglers made their way home after nearly eight long years of fighting.

Prisoners of war were released as well; British and Hessian soldiers who had been interned in Philadelphia and the South, having nowhere to go and no means to travel far, often settled among their conquerors. The rebel prisoners released from British jails were not so fortunate; from Bridewell, the Provost, and the five hellish hulks of the harbor they came, wandering like gray ghosts through the streets of Manhattan. Not a day went by that did not see at least a dozen half-dead scarecrows begging at the door of the Murray Street house. "Oh, no," scolded Charity, belying her name, "oh, not another lot! Don't open the door, Mother Malone! We will have nothing for the children! And they are so dirty!"

"Be still, Charity!" said Miranda, with a sharp weariness. "Beau, too, will be dirty and hungry . . . if he is alive." And she turned none away without a bit of food or drink or a piece of clothing.

Anxiously she peered into tired, hollow eyes, asking for news of Beau, turning away sadly from the blank stares. All during the long, hot summer they came, in twos and threes, and finally singly, dwindling at last to a trickle. It is not known where they got to, these



poor homeless men; perhaps they found a half-life in a doorway or gutter, or perished on the lonely roads out of the city.

By the time Miranda met recognition in the eyes of one of the last tattered prisoners, she was almost beyond understanding his words. For an epidemic had swept through the city, bringing raging fevers that wasted and hollow coughs that racked the body; the children had taken it first and, though recovering, were still weak and fretful, and Michael even now lay gravely ill in an upstairs bedroom. Miranda, along with Timothy and Charity, had not slept more than three hours in a week; wearily she pushed open the heavy front door.

This one looked better than most; he had boots and did not shuffle, and his beard had been clipped, though his color, in the white noon light, was pale as dirty cheese. "Yes, ma'am," he said, his voice like a rusty saw from disuse, "Yes, ma'am . . . Mr. Savage, ma'am. They shot him, the buggers. Shot him along of three others. They fell in the water, all, and was drowned. I seen it with my own eyes." With a weak and awkward gallantry, he put out his hand as Miranda swayed tiredly. She stepped back.

"No—don't touch me. We have the sickness here. . . ." She gripped the heavy wood of the doorway to steady herself. "Shot, you say? Drowned?"

"Yes, ma'am. They was in the little boat, see? Getting the barrel of water for us—rations, see? They was the strongest, them four . . . the rest of us was half dead. Well, it wasn't much light, not dawning yet, you see. But I seen it plain—I seen it! I seen 'em topple the guard overside. 'Twas Mr. Savage that done it . . . and then I seen the other guard—him on the old *Jersey*—he sees it, and he takes aim and fires, and hits one, and another guard come up and they get 'em all, like sittin' ducks . . . and they all goes overside and don't come up. And the guards get in another boat and go out to bring in the boat there with nobody in it. And there's the water, ma'am, closed over them, and smooth as glass it was and the sun comin' up. . . . What's the matter, ma'am? You gonna faint, ma'am?"

"No . . . no . . . I'm all right, thank you." She leaned against the wood, his voice, thin and harsh, sounding in her ears.

"He was a fine fellow, ma'am, Mr. Savage was. Always a cheery word and a grin, you might say. Though he had it as bad as the rest of us . . . a good old fellow . . ." And he shook his head mournfully. "That's the way of it, ma'am. Here I am, no good to anybody, and there he is, that fine fellow, with his head down under the

waves. . . ." He sniffed. "Filthy lobster-backs," he said, wiping his nose on a ragged scrap of sleeve.

She stared at him; she had not quite heard his last words, and had to think for a moment. "Ah, yes. Yes . . . thank you." With an effort she went on. "We have the sickness here. Come to the back door and I will put out a bundle for you. I cannot give you clothes . . . they may be contagious. . . ." She turned away, moving like a dream-walker in the cool, illness-darkened house.

Michael lingered, close to death, sometimes not fully conscious, through the fall and into the winter of '83. He had a racking cough, with a bloody spittle, and two small spots burned, like rouge marks, high on his cheekbones. He had "the wasting sickness," or some doctors called it "the consumption." Many had been left so after the summer fevers, and few recovered. When he was wide awake he had a madman's grip, almost pulling Miranda off her feet, his eyes glittering, his voice reedy and hoarse. "When I am dead, you must get away from here. To London . . . or to Jamaica. Yes—to Jamaica, where it is warm. Take the children . . . take them all away. When I am dead . . ."

"Hush," she soothed, desperately. "You will not die. Don't talk now . . . don't speak that way. . . ." She was aching tired, bone tired, sick with it.

"Beau will know what to do," he rasped. "When Beau returns, he will take care of you." And he would smile, and fall into a halfsleep.

The definitive treaty of peace between the old and new countries had been signed in September, but New York still seethed with hatred and recriminations. The vast Tory population began a frantic exodus which was to last all year. Those with means transported their families to England or the West Indies; many traveled by land to Montreal and eastern Canada. Thousands of patriots who had fled the city at the beginning of the war swarmed back; there were fights and riots in the streets. Many Tory families were evicted forcibly from their homes and slept on the wharves awaiting a boat that could take them away. The city was a great auction ground. Streets were piled high with furniture, bedding, books, pots and pans, and clothing; the sidewalks were blocked. The stuff went for a song; the Tories had to take what they could get. Many a rosewood cabinet, carved and polished, crackled in a fireplace, for there was still almost no firewood and that worth its weight in gold. Little of anything was to be had in the markets, though the population was thinning out; both Charity and Timothy spent hours each day in line for staples to

put on the table. Medicines, too, were very scarce, a few grains of laudanum fetched a whole guinea. The doctor shook his head, looking at Michael's wasted body; he turned away, saying, "Dear lady, save your money. It will not buy a remedy for this." His face was kind, but she wanted to smash her fist into it.

He must have seen her emotion, for he held out his hand and said, "You must pray." She stared. "Pray that he will go quickly."

She shut her mind to those words, and asked God instead for a miracle, and, in a way, her prayer was answered, though, like that year's spring, it was slow in coming.

Snow had lain on the city for a week, frozen hard as earth on the sidewalks; the streets were scarred and rutted like a battlefield, and icicles hung like trophies from the windows. Charity frowned as she looked down onto the front path; there was a permanent line between her brows now, and the youth of her face was all gone to marble, pretty but stern. "Oh, no," she said, "not another! I thought we had done with those beggars by now! This one has only one arm."

"I'll go," said Miranda, gently. "There is a lump of cheese in the larder and some bread. I'll get it."

"Take yesterday's loaf, it's good enough," said Charity. "In the bread box, under the cloth . . ."

Miranda felt the loaf; hard as a rock. She made a little face and took a fresh one, wrapping it quickly and taking a whole round cheese as well, and going along to the front hall. Through the lights set high in the door she saw a face—or half a face, for the glass was frosted on the windward side; the face was sharp at the jaw and fresh-shaven, under a neatly brushed white wig. She hurried then, hearing the knock, and opened the door.

The man who stood there was not at all like a beggar, though he was famine-thin. He wore a great-collared coat of heavy dark-blue stuff, showing lighter at the shoulders where epaulets had been removed. His right hand was gloved in white kid of good workmanship; his left sleeve hung empty, the end tucked neatly into the belt of the coat. She saw it was not a wig under the black velvet tricorne, but white hair brushed neatly back and clubbed. The face was thin and pleasant, the mouth looking ready to smile. Miranda made a gesture toward him with her bundle of food and stopped, holding it stiffly. One eyebrow in the stranger's face flew upward, like a bird's wing. Memory stabbed like a blow; her heart gave a great sickening lurch.

"Beau . . . it is. . . . You are not drowned . . . ?"

"It is too cold for drowning, my dear," he said pleasantly. "And now let me in and shut the door, do!"

She did not move as he stepped inside and leaned, smiling, against the closed door. "Darling," he said, "do not swoon . . . for I have only one arm and cannot catch you."

"No . . . no . . . I will not . . ."

He held out his good arm; she came into the curve of it, weeping wildly. Charity's face, alarmed, showed above the banister.

"Never mind," he called to her. "It is all right. It is I . . . Beau."

## *Chapter 18*

The eyewitness account of Beau's fellow prisoner had not been in error; it was true he had been shot, and presumed drowned, along with the others who manned the boat with him. He remembered very little of what had happened, except that he had felt a dreadful pain in his upper arm where the bullet went in, and, as he supposed, lost consciousness for a time. By some accident the current had carried him some yards away; when he could feel again, he found himself floating on his back, his head miraculously out of water, and his hurt shoulder throbbing rhythmically where it hit gently against the hull of a great ship. He heard voices above him, and felt himself being lifted, and then nothing, for the pain came again and strongly, and then the blackness and silence; he woke to warmth and dryness and the feel of a mattress under him. "Luck was with me, you see, for I was on a hospital ship. A British hospital ship, to be sure, with Cockney vowels in my ears . . . but they tended me. How well I cannot say, for it is all nightmare to me, what I remember. They took off my arm, somewhere among the nightmares. The bone was shattered and it was gangrenous, or so they said." He smiled a bitter smile. "And I had thought salt water washed wounds clean! Ah, well . . . I am lucky to be in one piece . . . what there is left of me. They did not know who I was, of course, or they might have tipped me back in—what is one rebel more or less? No . . . by the time—weeks after—when I could tell them, the armistice had happened. I was still very weak—more like a kitten than a man, though I had my wits



back—and I was sent to another hospital, a rebel one, upriver. *They* said my leg must come off, too, for a bullet had lodged in it, for good measure, and it was not healing well. I said no, never again . . . for by that time I remembered some of the nightmare. So, at length I recovered, and I am as you see me, able to shrug one shoulder only, and carrying a memento in my knee. It aches a little when rain is in the air, and I drag that foot still. But I am getting used to it. I miss the arm a little, though it is amazing what one can do with only one!" He reached his good hand forward to touch Miranda's cheek; she caught the hand and kissed it.

"It is good to be home," he said.

When the spring thaw came, the rigid grip of the disease relaxed, and let Michael go; he died on a crisp and sunny day in March. He knew Beau before he went, though his sight was blurred and he did not see the changes in him, the dead-white hair and the maiming, and only said, with a happy smile, "You are here . . . It is good, you will take care of my Miranda, and little Marie. You *will* wed . . . ? When I am gone? Promise!" And he gripped their hands in that sudden dreadful strength, his eyes bright as flames. And they promised, painfully, so as to give him peace.

Later, much later, Beau spoke of it, shy as he had never been. They had been clearing out the theater, their own again, without much thought of what they would do with the old scenery and the tired and strangely shabby costumes. "We might go back to England," he said. "London would welcome the greatest of all the Savages—which you would be, of course . . . if so be it you would take the name again . . ."

She looked at him, stricken. "Oh, Beau, you need not . . . There is no question of that."

"It was Michael's wish," he said, not meeting her eyes.

"Oh, my dear . . . he was not himself. He had been ill so long, and anxious, and under strain." She looked at him, seeing that he meant what he said, and with a nervous, sad little coquetry, said, "I am too old for you."

He smiled, a thin smile that did not lighten his eyes. "Oh, my dear, come!" And he led her to the mirror on the greenroom door. "Look!" And he held the candle close, for the corners were dim. "Tell me who in his right mind would see it so."

She saw herself in the shadowy glass, beside a man in his late middle years, one-armed, still tall, but famine-thin, with a brittle, sharp look about the face, and the white hair of an ancient. Even the eyes

were faded, though their look still mocked, like a laughing ghost. *She* was thinner, too, but it had served to bring out the lovely bones of her youth; she was over half a century, and aware of it, but the mirror lied.

"It is I who should not dare . . . as I am," he said. "But I think my one arm will serve as well as two of any other's. . . . Even as a child I never doubted myself. I dreamed of you even then, did you know? I knew that I would get you somehow . . . someday. For I see by your eyes that you have a little love for me. . . ."

"More than a little," she said, and moved into the circle of his arm.

## *Interval*

And so they were wed, in the blackened shell of Trinity Church; Beau's glorious patriot record outweighed their player status, and minister and congregation alike beamed upon the old-young relic of the war, and the fine-drawn, dark-eyed beauty in her silver-gray widow's gown who stood beside him.

One cannot know what the children thought, though little Marie adored Beau already, plain to see. Timothy knew his mother too well to be shocked at anything she did, but Charity, like all Puritans, saw sin in anything touched by joy. "It has been going on, no doubt, for years—behind our backs," she said, but only to herself.

The younger couple, with their twin boy and girl, were not going to London; perhaps in some dim recess of his mind Timothy feared the place, although he put it down to patriotism. They planned to go South, instead, where the war had touched more lightly. He had his share of the theater sale; it had brought a good sum, in the new postwar prosperity. He had his inheritance, too, for "it will come to you when I die, at any rate," said Miranda, newly practical. There were funds aplenty for the forming of a company; Timothy was headed for the Carolinas, or perhaps New Orleans, that giddy, pleasure-loving French town.

They parted, these two branches of the Savage family, with a few easy tears and their own private eagerness; they were never to meet

again. Timothy set off into the Southern sun, with a great wagon filled with scenery and costumes; he was richer than the itinerant players of his own history, but that was the only difference. Beau and Miranda took ship for London, traveling light, with little except the working script of Euripides' *Medea* and the sunny child Marie.

Miranda's gaunt and grand *Medea* is history; every theater student has read the accounts of it, aspiring actresses thrilling coldly to the dead, still glowing words. It was presented under Garrick's aegis, in the new, magnificent Drury Lane, enlarged to accommodate thousands. Beau's name has faded with time, though the knowledgeable call him the first modern stage director.

There is nothing of Miranda's genius in the portraits; even the most famous of them, the Romney, does not inform us. The brush that made a haughty bluestocking of the fiery Sarah Siddons and softened the vixen cunning of Emma Hamilton into a milkmaid prettiness has changed the pity and terror of Miranda's *Medea* to the startled grace of a stricken doe.

Though she triumphed, too, in all the great roles of Shakespeare, they paled beside her heroine of Euripides; this was one of the first successful revivals of a Greek classic, and the production came in for its share of glory. It was rumored that Lady Hamilton's famous "attitudes" in Greek draperies had been inspired by this *Medea*, though Emma herself said she copied them all from paintings. The neo-classic fashion came in after the French Revolution, and *Medea* was revived year after year, until Miranda's retirement in the first years of the nineteenth century; she was seventy-five and, when she stopped dyeing her hair, began at last to look it.

The grand old theater couple spent their last days in the family villa in Fiesole, warming their bones in the Tuscan sun, and wrangling good-humoredly in bad Italian. Beau was restless and, it must be remembered, a trifle younger; he wandered the byways and lanes of the countryside, sipping the native wines of the tiny village inns, sharing hot bread with the peasant bakers, and digging up the rich, treasure-laden soil for the ancient shards so loved, long ago, by Thomasina's unfrocked father, Fra Tommaso. He made a little collection of these old broken clay artifacts, and collected, too, the drawings and paintings of the venerable Saviggi family: Eduardo with his Neddo mask; Red Nell, voluptuous in garish chalks; adorable Thomasina with her twinkling long legs; and a small but valuable Bronzini of the Medici ancestress, Giulia.

He held up a sketch of Thomasina, a delicate head with tossing

dark curls and a sweet, curved shoulder. "Andrea always said you were in the direct line . . . Do you not see a resemblance?"

Miranda answered, "I was never so pretty," and, with a touch of malice, "or so vapid."

For, if Romney had failed to capture Miranda's great-souled beauty, how should the lesser artist of post-Renaissance Florence do justice to the wayward charm of Thomasina? No, players' qualities must live in the imagination; like Sappho, they endure only in fragments.

Beau began his memoirs, too, though he died before he could finish them. They are not much good to us today; the handwriting is spidery and nearly illegible and the ink has faded; here and there a scrap of a sentence leaps out suddenly, like an agile ghost.

Miranda died soon after; the same year is carved upon their headstones. They are buried in the little family graveyard in Fiesole, in ground hallowed only by their presence. It was crowded with Savignis even then; now there is no room left.

The little Marie grew up clever and sprightly; she joined the London Savages at the family theater, the Agincourt Field, married a fellow actor, and raised three children, one of whom became a popular Harlequin. But we will leave these London players to their Christmas Pantomimes, their Music Halls, and their concert parties, and come back across the ocean to Timothy, and those who came after him, in America.

In the Southern states the war had left whole villages peopled by none but women, children, and a few graybeards; in the larger towns, crippled veterans begged in the streets, or lay in drunken stupor in the dusty sunlight. Fields blew in idle golden glory, waist high, overgrown with weeds, and the broad-leaved tobacco rotted in the small holdings.

Once Timothy's family saw, from its wagon, a stretch of red earth churned and twisted by cavalry, looking like hardened lava, the scars of an old battle; there were a few arrows, spent, dotting the road, and in the dust one long turkey feather, dyed red; the British had used Indian warriors here.

Baltimore, like New York, had been largely Tory; it was almost deserted. Not till Charleston and Savannah did they see well-fed folk without the leap of fear in their eyes.

The David Douglas troupe was in those cities before them, though, an acting company in each burgeoning town; they pushed on.



"It will have to be New Orleans after all," said Timothy. It was the city that had beckoned him all along.

There were five theaters already in the Creole town, and all flourishing; it was not difficult to set up a sixth. They leased a tiny box of a building in one of the many city squares; it had been used for dances and recitals, and had a proper stage with a good-sized apron. Timothy had recruited four actors from the David Douglas company in Charleston; it was easy enough to better their salaries, for Douglas had been dogged by ill-luck for years, and often could not pay at all. The five together formed the nucleus of an acting company, with a few ragtag French acrobats filling in. Timothy's most fortunate circumstance was his encounter with an itinerant artist of some education who had traveled on the Continent and had been much impressed by the charming little theaters that could still be found in the larger Italian towns. *Le Petit Sauvage*, as it came to be called, much resembled the Renaissance playhouses of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, when the artist, Guy St. Clair, had worked his enchantments on it. The façade and inner walls were covered with bold and brilliant paintings: flowers, ribbons, pastoral scenes, and characters meant to depict the best known of Shakespeare. Translated, as it were, through Italian influence and French invention, *Macbeth* and his lady, *Hamlet*, *Juliet*, and the jealous Moor might very well have been the *Thomasinas*, *Neddos*, and the *Giulias* of the lost Saviggi past.

The Shakespeare which was offered at *Le Petit Sauvage* bore little resemblance to the plays on which Timothy had been nurtured; the lines had been cut to the bone, and larded throughout with French words. After a very short time indeed, the plays themselves, like the theater, came to have a flavor of the delightful, evanescent past; the drama was kept, and became melodrama, and the comedy interludes were expanded into long scenes filled with intricate business, slapstick, and acrobatics. By the time Timothy's twins were grown, a mere dozen years, the tragedies had found happy endings; dead duellists sprang miraculously to life, lost kingdoms were restored, and all the lovers were reunited to sing a last romantic duet. *Le Petit Sauvage* was very popular with clerks, shopkeepers, ladies' maids, and prostitutes; on the considerable profits Timothy built a great house in the Spanish style, walled, with a cool, shadowy courtyard in which two fountains played prettily. Charity had a gardener, a coachman, and two maids, and no longer did her own shopping. She grew a long face and thin lips to go with her frown line, and managed the box-

office receipts; her stern Puritan features looked out of the little front window of the theater, framed by the gay, beguiling painted creatures of Guy St. Clair's imagination, and lending an unmistakable air of respectability to the raffish charm of *Le Petit Sauvage*.

Young Libby Savage, christened Liberty, appeared for a few brief years as the ingenue of the company; she had no particular talent and little ambition, though her youthful prettiness brought her popularity. Her looks faded early, like her mother's; she married one of the French actors and had six children, one of whom enjoyed a certain fame as Captain Jacques of the showboat *Louisiana Lady*. He made and lost three fortunes, for these floating palaces were not much more than gambling dens and Captain Jacques disdained to cheat. He is remembered chiefly for his hot black eyes, his great mustachios, and his fine, swaggering villains; he lost the *Louisiana Lady*, too, finally, and came back to New Orleans and *Le Petit Sauvage*. The family theater, if it did not prosper under Libby's descendants, at least endured. It was still in operation up to and throughout the Civil War, until the dreadful fame of John Wilkes Booth tarred its players, as it did all actors, with the same scurrilous brush.

Libby's brother, Samuel, seems to have had a touch of his grandmother's genius. Quite early he left *Le Petit Sauvage*, formed a Shakespearean company of his own, and toured the larger cities of the Southern states. Reports of his acting are glowing; he was known as "the American Kemble." His wife trouped along with him, playing the great tragic heroines; she came in for her share of praise, too, but there are no pictures of her, and even her name is lost; she was billed only as "Mrs. Savage." Their children were players, but undistinguished; not one name comes down to us, though a Dexter Savage, probably a grandson, is listed among the fallen at Appomattox.

The showboats began to flourish after the Civil War; there were literally dozens of them operating on the Mississippi alone. Two generations of Savages played the river towns: another Dexter, too pretty in the hero parts, wearing the overalls and straw broad-brim of the farmer or the decent dark suit of the honest young clerk; Polly and Patty, the singing twins, strumming their mandolins in the interval, and, later, starring as Topsy and Eva in one of the many *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* that flourished for so many decades; there is even a pose of a minstrel show, with one Savage in blackface and another starring as interlocutor. There are two letters from an Emmaline Savage who joined a covered-wagon troupe to tour the mining towns of the vast, empty Western plains. One letter, jubilant, comes from

Deadwood, South Dakota, where the improvised stage was showered, at curtain call, with gold nuggets—"some of them so huge that we must duck or be bruised. Imagine!" she writes. The second letter is from Fort Larabee, Texas, where the troupe shares the limelight with four hanged outlaws; after this, there is nothing, no mention at all of the dauntless Emmaline; the Golden West of the eighties has swallowed her up.

At the turn of the century, or a year or so earlier, another Samuel Savage was born; he was the son of two bright young stars, still rising, of the new vaudeville, Ethel and Joe Savage. Joe, born a Cassidy, had taken his wife's name, for it was in her veins that the illustrious old blood ran, a straight line back to the first Sam, his father, Timothy, and his grandmother Miranda, who had brought Shakespeare to America. Beyond that, Ethel knew little of her forebears; she had a vague hint of Italian beginnings, a legend of a king's mistress, and the name of a family theater in London, the Agincourt Field. She had fed her Sammy with these tales; though they were scanty, and he only eight years old, he would always remember them.

"Moll Savage and Sir Hercules—that was her husband—they were the first," Ethel would say to her little boy. "King Henry the Fifth was her great friend." And here she would pause, for even stage folk were mealy-mouthed in those days, especially before children. "King Henry made a knight out of Sir Hercules, and gave them a theater for a wedding present. Someday I want to go to London and see it . . . the Agincourt Field."

"Wouldn't it belong to us now?" asked practical little Sammy, and they would laugh delightedly, shaking their heads.

"That's my boy!" Joe would say proudly.

"Well—I don't know," Ethel would say, doubtfully. "There aren't any records that I know of. But just to see it! And to think that our family is so old! I'll go someday," she finished.

Joe was proud, too, though it was not his family. Royalty, knighthood, and Shakespeare, too—it was a heady brew. Besides, most variety artists nurse a secret longing to play "the Bard," to "go legit." Joe used to say fondly, when Ethel came off after her solo, "You got class, honey!" And she would flash him her brilliant smile, pat her puff of pompadour, and trip lightly back on stage for her bow.

Ethel and Joe were headliners, and Sammy already a veteran performer at the age of eight; they were playing a three-week engagement at the Orpheum Variety House in San Francisco, almost at the end of their tour. It was April 1906.

BOOK THREE



San Francisco, *1906*



## Chapter 1

The Geary Hotel was a modest establishment (singles, doubles, housekeeping) in the heart of San Francisco's theater district; it was a short walk from the Orpheum Variety House, and most of the artists sharing the bill with the Savages were staying there too. They could have afforded the Palace Hotel this time around, but Ethel shook her head. "I wouldn't feel right," she said.

Nor, indeed, would Joe, for all that they were featured artists now and signed up for another ten weeks; places like the Geary had been home to them all their lives, for both of them had been "born in a trunk," almost literally, the children of troupers. Joe's father and brothers still did the minstrel shows in the small towns of Iowa and Illinois, town halls in the winter and fairgrounds in the summer, and Ethel had narrowly escaped following her mother as the Eva opposite a family Topsy. No, hotels like the Mark Hopkins, the St. Francis, and the Palace were not for them. "Though we might pop over for tea, old boy—as the British say," quipped Ethel with a kind of cheeky hauteur. "I've 'eard the Palace does you a good tea . . ."

"Dinner, Ethel!" cried Joe. "We could have dinner between shows. There's time . . ."

"Shall we?" Ethel's eyes danced, as adorable heroines' in books are said to do; she had the kind of face which suggested irrepressible mischief; it was a large part of her stage appeal. "I've never been inside the Palace, even . . . and you don't hit Frisco every week!"

"Nor two-a-day either," said Joe, with a rueful smile. For variety shows, in the smaller towns, played three and sometimes four shows a day, an exhausting round with hardly time to snatch a bun and coffee between.

"Dinner at the Palace . . . would you like that, mine Sammovitch?" asked Ethel gaily, bending down to smile at her small son. He grinned back, a sturdy little boy in a checkered cap like his father's; he loved it when she called him silly names. Sammovitch was a new one; there were six Russian acrobats on the bill with them this week.

"Can Laverne come, too?" Laverne was Goldilocks in the act, a rabbit blonde child who looked anemic by daylight. She was a cou-

ple of years older than Sammy and rather nasty; she frightened him with ghost stories and sometimes pinched him, but he had a fond loyalty; she was the only child he knew.

"Of course Laverne . . . and Aunt Mabel, too," said Ethel. "I'll ask them before the show . . . maybe they won't want to."

"They'll want to," said Joe, who rather hoped they would not. Ethel pretended not to have heard and began to hum as they walked toward the Orpheum Theatre.

For Laverne's mother, Mabel, was Ethel's best friend; they had toured together three whole years when they were both still in their teens, before ever she and Joe had met. They had had a sister act, songs, and dances, Mabel on piano and Ethel strumming a guitar rather poorly, but with her own winning smile; they had finished up with a somewhat daring buck-and-wing, borrowed from a minstrel show, in knee-length dresses. They had been more of a size in those days, before Mabel's "trouble."

For Mabel had been seduced by a Bavarian magician, who had got her with child and then done a disappearing act, as Joe, that wag, had put it. Mabel had waited and hoped, fretted and eaten chocolates, unable to make up her mind to anything, until she had grown big as a house and had to leave the act. Her folks had been "show-boat," and had taken her in and even made a place for her in the floating troupe on the Ohio, after her little girl was born. But Mabel's heart was not in the river melodramas; she had got a taste for vaudeville, or perhaps she hoped to meet up with her magician again. Ethel had encountered her in an agent's office in Chicago, two years ago, and the long-lost friends had embraced with tears of joy.

Mabel had gained far too much weight to dance again—"She's a size sixteen if she's an ounce," confided Ethel to Joe, sadly. But she had still her high, sweet, small voice, a portfolio of "novelty" music she herself had written for the piano, and little golden-haired Laverne. And over a reunion supper in Joe's and Ethel's lodgings, the present act was born, *Goldilocks and the Three Savages*, which had, after a mere year and a half, landed them all in "the big time." "I owe Mabel a lot," Ethel always said.

Joe thought it was just as much the other way around, but said nothing, for he loved Ethel. But to himself he shook his head; he thought they lived, as his Irish grandmother used to say, entirely too much "in each other's pockets."

Mabel accepted with alacrity and dainty little cries of joy, as expected, and Joe went glumly behind the screen to strip to his un-

dershirt and tie on his old, washed-out flannel robe. Being headliners, they had a dressing-room to themselves, just for their act, and no more chivvying for the best place at the mirror or locking up the makeup boxes. He sat down and began to slap cocoa butter into his face, working it in and stretching his features, warming up. He picked up the stick of greasepaint (Light Juvenile #3) and pulled off the cardboard top, seeing as he did so Ethel's warning eye in the mirror. "Joel!" she hissed. "Your towel!"

He grinned. "Sorry!" He always forgot; his robe, though repeatedly scrubbed, had orangy stains all around the neck. He hung the towel, orangy too, over his shoulders and tucked it in. Then he drew the stick across his forehead, down his nose and each cheek, with a daub on the chin; he looked like a streaked, peach-colored Indian. He made a face at himself in the glass and began to blend the stuff with the grease.

Little Sam already did his own makeup, a replica of his father's even to the lipsticked mouth and the red dot at the inner corner of each eye ("to lend brilliance"). Ethel, standing off and squinting, applied the finishing touch of a rouged rabbit's foot just before he made his entrance. But Mabel spent so much time on her small daughter's face and hair that often she had barely a moment left for herself and made do with a hasty powder-up, a smear of lip rouge, and two quick circles of pink on each cheek. It was a rather charming act for those times, though inexpressibly gauche by today's standards. But the vaudeville was struggling to throw off its squalid beginnings, and "family shows" were coming in. No more the smoky dives with their littered floors and their spittoons, or the improvised stage of the low brothel; no longer the filthy joke, the off-color routine, the scanty costume; vaudeville was becoming respectable. This, as much as anything, accounted for the success of their turn, for child performers, and the innocuous sentimentality which clung to them, were the sure thing, the biggest draw of all, especially on "the road." Our young performers were no exception. From the first moment when little Goldilocks in her pink pinafore stepped onto the empty stage, fragile and simpering against the bulky furniture of the set, a fond sigh went up from the family audience; many out front, indeed, had youngsters her age, though admittedly not so rosy, or with such yellow sausage curls; Laverne and others like her, all over America, were their dream children, bright as rainbows, as inviolate as angels.

The act followed the Three Bears fairytale almost word for word—a clever idea which they credited to little Sammy, who, pointing to a

storybook illustration, said wonderingly, "Laverne!" The entrance of the three Savages in their brown plush teddy-bear suits always drew applause, and small Sammy's piping voice even more. They were an attractive family, the three of them, with an engaging and sprightly manner and an ingenuous desire to please; the audiences which doted on Goldilocks's pretty ways were thoroughly captivated by the charming villains of the piece. It was, in its way, a rudimentary musical; Mabel's tunes and lyrics had a naïve nursery charm; her fingers tripped over the keys more delightfully than her feet had ever twinkled on the boards. At the finale, departing from the fairytale, the three bears shed their furry selves to reveal three trim and fashionable Savages, who joined the curly-topped visitor and danced their way into the audience's hearts. Each of them did a solo turn, cleverly worked out by Joe, who was something of a choreographer, and each received deafening applause, even at the first show, when the audience customarily "sat on its hands," in theatrical parlance; but Sammy's solo stopped the show, and he had to do at least one encore, sometimes two. There was no real jealousy among them—the act was still too new, and Ethel and Joe, at least, knew which side their bread was buttered on. Every now and then, though, when there had been two encores, sweet little Laverne would give Sammy a particularly vicious pinch as she tripped past in the darkened wings; he never told.

They had opened at the Orpheum on a Monday; today was Tuesday, April 17, and the last day of Mardi Gras. At the huge new Mechanics Pavilion the celebration was in full swing; there had been roller-skating, the latest sport, for several weeks there, and this was the day of the big races. There were empty seats at the Orpheum, for all San Francisco had flocked to the Mechanics Pavilion; Sammy had begged to go, but there was no time, of course—the races would be over before they could get their makeup off, and besides, the Pavilion was too far away, clear across town. Dinner at the Palace Hotel would have to be a substitute, though for children, of course, it could not compare. "I'll take you Sunday," promised Joe. "You and Laverne. We'll rent some skates, too. We can skate all afternoon."

They emerged from the Orpheum stage door, scrubbed to a shine and dressed in their best; Joe went to the corner, put two fingers in his mouth, and whistled for a hansom. They did not often do this, in any town, for the hansoms were very expensive, and Ethel always had an eye on the rainy day which might come. "But what the heck," thought Joe, "it's Mardi Gras." He was a Catholic, though he



did not keep Lent, and had not been to confession in a year. "Easter," he thought, "we'll all go to Mass on Easter. Good Friday," he thought, shaking his head, "bad for business, by rights we ought not to play." But still, it was in their contract. He opened the hansom door and handed the women in.

"Do you have a reservation, sir?" The figure which bore down on them in the Palace dining room was formidable, tall and extremely thin in black cutaway jacket and high, starched white collar, the *maitre d'*.

"Oh . . . no," said Joe, in consternation; it had never occurred to him.

"I'm afraid the tables are all taken," said the black-and-white figure in a cold voice. Joe, looking past his shoulder, thought that it certainly did not look like it; he felt the beginnings of indignation. A sea of white-crisped tables spread before his eyes; it was still early, not yet six o'clock. Joe opened his mouth to protest; Ethel dug warning fingers into his arm. "Oh, please, sir," she said to the headwaiter, in her high, clear voice trained to carry to the balcony, "please try—it's our only chance, in a way. We couldn't call—we're playing down at the Orpheum. There usually isn't time . . . between the shows, you know." She rolled her large, pretty, urchin's eyes expressively, pouting a little.

Heads were turning; a short, stocky man, black-mustached, over-coated, rose from a corner table and came toward them.

"They can have my table, Franco—I'm just leaving for the opera house." And he slipped something into the waiter's hand, winking at Ethel. "Vaudeville, are you? Fine entertainment, vaudeville . . . thinking of it myself one day . . ."

His voice was deep; oily and rich, it had an overlay, a hint of foreignness. Ethel stared at him, her pink-rouged lips parting. "Oh-h-h," she breathed. "Mr. Caruso!"

He bowed, his hand over his heart. "Glad to be of service, ma'am." He rested a hand on little Sammy's water-slicked hair, and, turning, pinched Laverne's cheek, chuckling juicily. "Your family, ma'am? Fine bambinos . . ." He snapped his fingers at the headwaiter. "Franco—have some brandy and soda sent to my suite." He winked again at Ethel. "My throat, you know . . ." He bowed again. "Take care of my friends, now, Franco." And he was off, leaving a soft mist of cigar smoke and alcohol.

The headwaiter, stiff-faced, snapped fingers in his turn; two underlings came hurrying to clear the table.

"Caruso, imagine!" whispered Ethel, as she took her seat.

"He was real taken with you, honey," said Joe, pride making his voice shake.

"He smelled bad," said Laverne, lifting her little chapped nose; Laverne always had a cold.

"Sh-h-h, sweetheart," said Mabel, with a ladylike titter. "That's just a nice man-smell."

Little Sammy nodded, solemn. "Brandy," he said.

"Oh, no, Sammovitch!" cried Ethel, softly. "He wouldn't take brandy before a show—no one would! That was for *after*! Why, he has an opening tonight! *Carmen*, it is."

Mabel tossed her head, roguish; she hummed a bar of the gypsy dance under her breath.

"Mama!" said Laverne. "The man's looking at you!"

Mabel subsided, sheepish, and took the menu from the waiter. Her face fell. "French!" she whispered.

"Would the gentleman like to order wine?"

Joe grinned. "What do you say, honey? Just this once? A glass apiece . . . it's still early. . . ."

"Well," said Ethel, looking up from her menu; she, too, was a little intimidated. "If you say so, Joe. But not for the children!"

"Aw, come on, honey—they can have a sip! It's Mardi Gras!" He nodded to the waiter, holding up five fingers. "Bring five glasses."

"May I suggest a carafe, sir?"

"Oh . . . oh, yes."

"The *vin ordinaire*?" asked the waiter, raising his brows.

"That, too," said Joe with a grin, deciding to brave it out.

"Yes, sir. Would you like to order from the menu now, sir?"

Ethel interrupted. "I'll tell you what, waiter. Our friend Mr. Caruso said we should put ourselves in your hands. You order for us. Whatever you recommend. We'll leave it up to you."

"Price is no object," said Joe wildly. "Just bring us the best!"

The bewildering array of heavy silver, gleaming china, and starched white napery subdued them all, and stunned the two children into something close to absolute silence. The soft footfalls of the waiters, the gentle clatter of trays, the discreet and muted hum of voices kept even Ethel to a whisper. Before they had finished the first course of embarrassingly noisy celery and wrinkled, rather nasty black olives, the dining-room had nearly filled up with pre-theater diners, some of them in full evening dress. San Francisco was a big town for touring shows; besides the opera house and their own Or-

pheum Variety, there were three plays running, and one which had just closed, starring the youngest member of the new Barrymore clan, John. Victor Herbert's *Babes in Toyland* was playing to capacity business at the Columbia; they passed it every day, threading their way through the long line that stretched from the box office. They would never see it, of course; that was the trouble about being a hit yourself; even their matinees were at the same times.

The children were not big eaters at any time; the mounds of strange, delicious food grew cold on their plates, the delicate sauces congealing into lava-like mounds. "I wish we could take it home," whispered Ethel, throatily.

"You only live once," said Joe, cryptically, swallowing the last of his wine.

Sammy munched bread and butter, for once spread thickly enough, as he had done it himself; the wine had disappointed him, its lambent rubies tasting thin and sour upon his tongue, but Laverne had pretended to like it, holding out her glass for more and acting giddy. Only when dessert was brought did he smile, for it was a great ice, in the shape of a toy drum, set down in the very center of the table. "Oh-h-h," he breathed. It was in honor of *Babes in Toyland*, of course; the street peddlers were doing a good business in wooden replicas, and some of the novelty stores sold tiny gold drum-shaped pins for the lapel. Sammy was sensitive; when the waiter cut into the huge confection, he nearly cried. "Eat it up, Sammovitch—before it melts!" cried Ethel, gaily. The wine had gone to her head a little, and she hummed all the way to the Orpheum, walking close in the circle of Joe's arm.

They had played three shows already, counting yesterday, and no longer had any real nerves; they crowded into the busy wings to get a look at the other acts. There were two comedians with big red noses and baggy pants who fell down a lot, keeping up a continuous loud patter that was punctuated by uneasy laughter; Sammy did not get the point of their jokes and turned to his mother with a questioning look. Ethel made a little face and held her nose. "Terrible!" she said, very low, for Joe's ears. "They'll get their notice Friday—mark my words! This is a family bill!"

Some of the acts could not be seen well from where they stood, acts that used a box set with flats; the Russian acrobats, for instance, performed against a full background, with set wings, that represented the Czar's palace. The set itself got applause, it must have been good, but all they could see was the back of it, wooden struts and

canvas and the bolts that held it fast. This act came just before the first intermission so that the set could be changed. "Solomon and his Magic Canines," too, was hard to get a good look at, with its garishly opulent Arabian Nights set. Sammy had seen all the little dogs in their cages, yapping nervously in the stage-door passage, and Solomon, too, frightening in his great black beard and jeweled turban. All that Sammy saw now, craning his neck, was a pair of dogs that jumped through flaming hoops, and one prick-eared white one riding a miniature bicycle, its front paws thrust through the sleeves of a little red coat. Beside him, his mother made a clucking sound with her tongue. "I hate dog acts," she whispered to Joe. "They beat them . . ."

A pair of jugglers performed before the curtain, the stagehands too noisy behind; they were clever, though, doing wonderful things with many glass balls and never breaking one.

One act was strangely impressive, though in truth Sammy understood little of it, and Laverne giggled, quickly shushed. A beautiful old man, with a head like a statue's, came on, walking downstage right to the footlights; the audience seemed to hold its breath; he had an extraordinary presence and the face of a brooding god. He wore a Roman toga, or what passed for one, draped not unskillfully, leaving one shoulder bare; they had seen his pictures out front, stark and compelling beside the glossy frozen smiles; he was billed as "Mordecai Miller—A Visit with the Bard." The little boy watched, fascinated, as the sad and predatory face stared outward, quelling the watchers, though he did not need to, for they were quiet as dormice. He announced, after a long moment, in his organ voice, that he would do a selection from *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare. There was a little patter of applause; he waited, settling his folds; then, thrusting forward in the classic pose one sandaled old foot, he launched into the Mark Antony funeral oration. The noble words rose, an eagle's flight, sending a small chill, meaningless, over Sammy's skin, and, at the end, the pause before the clapping brought the quick sting of tears behind his eyelids. He had never heard anything like it, and listened entranced to Macbeth, Shylock, and Lear. Through the swell of applause at the end came a "Bravo!" from down front, and several more as old Mordecai turned back in grave dignity for another bow.

Sammy applied his eye, squinting, to the lowest peephole in the heavy masking drape where he stood; he saw a thin young man, standing, clapping his hands together over his head, laughing and shouting. He was in the second row and from behind him came hissed



commands to "Sit down! Don't block the stage!" but, still laughing, he pushed past his row of knees, dragging his young woman companion behind him, and went on up the aisle. They were in evening clothes—not the custom here at the Orpheum; the young woman's bare shoulders gleamed blue-white like marble in the dark house. Sammy felt an unaccountable sense of loss as the proud blade of a face vanished from his sight. He heard old Mordecai say, huskily, behind him, "It's young Jack! Jack Barrymore! I toured with his father for three whole years!" And he looked up to see the thin, carmined lips twitch slightly in a wintry smile.

"Oh, you were wonderful, Mr. Miller!" said Ethel, meaning it.

The old tragedian looked down at her, liking what he saw; he inclined his head, a royal nod. "Thank you, my dear . . . you may call me Mordecai!" He nodded again, and went past them, his sandaled feet slapping softly on the bare boards.

Ethel squeezed her little boy's thin shoulders. "Sammy—there goes the greatest actor in the world!" He was not, but for many years Sammy believed it. "Hurry!" cried Ethel, softly, giving him a little push. "We're on after this one!" They took up their positions in the wings, listening to the hoarse cries of the tumblers who were on before them, hearing the drum rolls and the thudding bare feet. It was over, to a scattering of applause; Sammy heard Mabel's piano, suddenly loud as the curtain parted; he checked his fly, beneath the fur of his teddy-bear suit, as his father had taught him. They were on.

## *Chapter 2*

"Oh, it's been a perfect day!" Ethel stood on tiptoe to kiss Joe; when she did that, she always twined her arms around his neck and kicked up one foot behind her, a stage convention. She made a pretty picture under the gaslight, Sammy thought, even in Joe's old bathrobe with the sleeves rolled up into lumpy cuffs; the light was all soft and golden, making the edges of her hair bronze. "Dinner at the Palace . . . and the wine . . . and Mr. Caruso! Wasn't he wonderful?" She did not wait for an answer; she seldom did. "And then that wonderful Shakespeare and Mr. Miller . . . Mordecai!"

"You were wonderful tonight, too," said loyal Joe.

"Second night's always best," said Ethel. "We were all wonderful . . . we're a hit!"

The couple were standing in one bedroom of the rather grubby suite; a small kitchen led to the other bedroom, occupied by the Kellys, Mabel and Laverne. "I'll just knock on Mabel's door to say good night," said Ethel, leaving his arms.

In the kitchen Sammy was carefully setting down his empty milk glass in the sink. Ethel ran water in it. "Sure you don't have to go to the bathroom, Sammovitch? Speak now or forever hold your peace!" He grinned wisely; he considered it something of a pun, though he was never sure she meant it that way. "I went before," he said. She bent his ears forward, examining behind them. "Sammy!" She snatched up the dishcloth and scrubbed. He screwed up his eyes and held his breath, hating the greasy cloth. "Mama!"

"There!" she exclaimed. "Run along . . . I'll tuck you in." She watched him go, smiling, thinking that he needed a new nightshirt; he was growing out of everything.

She knocked lightly on Mabel's closed door. "Nighty-night . . ." It opened, surprising her.

"Oh, Ethel . . . you ought to get a nice peignoir!" Mabel shook her head, making her paper curlers dance; she had a lacy confection, bright peach, that trailed the floor and looked new.

"I know," said Ethel, ruefully. "I keep meaning to buy some nice nightclothes. Maybe tomorrow—"

Mabel shook a playful forefinger. "You never know," she said, like a sibyl. "Well—good night."

"Good night, sweetie."

"Oh—" Mabel stuck her head around the door again. "Bathroom?"

You had to go through her bedroom to get to it—an inconvenience, but better than having it down the hall and sharing with everybody. "I've been," said Ethel. "Nighty-night!"

Joe arranged the screen around the little boy's cot; it gave them all a bit of privacy. "Good night, old man," he said, ruffling Sammy's hair; they no longer kissed, it was not manly, now that Sammy was eight years old. Ethel, though, hugged him close to her, and brushed her lips lightly across his forehead. ". . . tight! Don't let the bedbugs bite!" He grinned up at her; it was not always just a comical rhyme; in Omaha City he had wakened, covered with fiery red welts. It was one of the hazards of the road. He watched her cross the room to her

own big bed, where Joe waited; noiselessly he edged the coverlet down from his neck where she had tucked it; his nightshirt was flannel and warm. The last thing he saw, around the corner of the screen, was the big white face of the alarm clock; in the dim night-light it read 12:30—later than usual. He shut his eyes. The house was very quiet; he slept.

The hours of night passed and dawn came, filtering through the tan blinds at the window, splintering along the cracks; it would be sunny. Horses neighed in the stable at the corner of the street, a sound of panic in the silence. Somewhere a church bell rang, five rolling notes. Birds were busy in a gaunt backyard tree, or in the eaves, unusually loud; the bedside clock ticked.

Minutes passed; it grew very quiet, as if horses, bells, birds held their breath, waiting for something. The little boy came awake suddenly, opening his eyes. What had wakened him? The clock read 5:11. The bathroom, Sammy thought. I have to go to the bathroom. He lay still, feeling the pressure, like a hand low on his stomach. He hated to go through the Kellys' bedroom; could he hold it? Suddenly the toilet flushed, a rude gurgle, long drawn out; well, he would have to wait a bit. He lay very still, listening; a heartbeat went by, two. Suddenly the bed began to shake.

Sammy lay in bed, gripping the mattress, while the frame leaped up and down like something alive. Numb with terror, he saw, out of the corner of his eye, the bedside table skitter across the floor, hitting the wall; the bureau slowly fell over; the walls of the room undulated, like waves in the sea. From outside came the noise of shattering glass and a deep, ominous crunch of cracking stone; timbers shrieked in strain. Through it all was a sound like thousands of violins out of tune.

The bed, shaking like a rat in a terrier's mouth, slid toward the outer wall, hitting it just under the opened window. Sammy felt it begin to go back toward where it had come from and he thrust his hand out to hold on to the sill. In a flash he saw the dawn sky, horribly green, with a crescent moon in it; the fire escape fell away from the wall outside, screaming metallicity. He saw the high tower of the St. Francis Hotel sway sickeningly, like a reed, and felt his own house sway and shudder, and heard a sound like a huge cloth ripping. The house split in two, the walls buckling; the raised window fell on his clutching hand with agonizing force; he fainted.

The time was 5:12; in less than a minute there had been two severe shocks, and at 5:13 it was over, the worst earthquake ever re-

corded in North America. Whole areas of the city lay in ruins; Chinatown had been badly hit, mounds of debris lying in the mean streets, while the infamous Barbary Coast was almost completely destroyed, the shoddy, squalid "cribs" and "cowpens" of its organized prostitution leveled, never to flourish again. Huge craters gaped in the streets of downtown San Francisco, and water spouted high in the air from broken mains; rubble dust hung suffocatingly in the air, and the sound of falling masonry continued long after the shocks had subsided. Over all was a strange, sulfuric smell and the constant hissing of escaping gas from the mains under the buildings and streets. In a half-hour after the quake, over fifty fires had started; sirens screamed and fire bells clanged, uselessly; there was no water, for the main reservoir pipes had been breached. The city rang loud with other bells, too—church bells jangling crazily from twisted steeples. Half-clad people ran wildly through the streets, their mouths open in soundless screams; nothing could be heard above the clamor of the insane carillon.

Within minutes rescue workers were pulling wounded from the ruins; there were some firemen, some police, but in the main these were simply those fortunate souls who miraculously had escaped hurt. For the earthquake, like most natural disasters, was wanton; whole blocks might be felled and one narrow building in the center left standing, untouched; often whole families were buried beneath tons of debris, while a wailing, frightened baby lay kicking in its crib, still warmly blanketed. And so it was that Sammy was carried from the wreckage of the Geary Hotel, while the white dust rose, gently swirling, above the wasteland at its core. The roof and one wall had fallen in, and lay far below in a great crater, burying all—stoves, beds, rugs, chests, and sleepers who had been alive minutes before. Save for a bedpost and a flung yellow slipper, nothing showed above the mound of rubble. Of the Geary, three walls still stood; against one a stairway climbed, its railings intact, while, on some floors, jagged portions of rooms jutted out over the gaping hole.

The small alcove which held Sammy's bed was one of these, still precariously poised above the wreckage. From a carefully placed ladder, arms opened the window, miraculously unbroken, reached in and pulled Sammy out. They had got him all the way down the ladder before he woke to consciousness. He heard a voice, weary and hoarse from shock: "That's the lot . . . there can't be anyone else left alive in that. . . . Poor devils!"

Sammy felt himself being lifted up and placed on something hard;



he opened his eyes to nightmare; although he had never seen one, he knew it looked like a battlefield, the sky beyond already red with the fires. He knew he was in a wagon, on the floor; it rocked gently, and a wheel creaked; he heard the snuffle of a horse, close. A face appeared above the high side of the wagon, streaky and black with soot and sweat, the eyes white and staring. Someone had stilled the nearest church bell, or perhaps the belfry had collapsed; jangling came from far away, and over it the heavy thud of falling stones; a high, thin shriek, human, rose chillingly, somewhere near, and died away. The face, hanging above the wagon, disembodied, spoke. "You'll be all right now, lad . . . they'll take care of you. . . ."

Sammy heard another voice, deep and rich, beside him; he slewed his eyes around. It was the great Shakespearean actor Mordecai Miller. He was in the wagon, too, seated, his nightshirt spattered with blood; blood matted his white hair from a deep gash at his temple and dripped on the white face that lay in his lap. It was Laverne's face, Sammy saw; she looked frighteningly still, her eyes closed. Mordecai wiped the blood from her pale cheek with a tender finger, leaving a pink smear. "She's breathing, boy. . . . I brought her out—we were both flung clear. She's alive, all right, she spoke to me . . . but she took a bad knock on the head. . . ."

The unknown face above the wagon spoke again. "Concussion?" Mordecai shrugged. "Most likely . . . poor child."

The rescue worker handed Mordecai a small flask. "Here—brandy. Keep it. Matt'll take care of you now . . . take you to help." A driver climbed onto the wagon seat behind the horse, clucking to it. The horse whinnied and snorted, going forward with a jolt. Sammy moaned, deep in his throat; he could not speak, his mouth was dry and dusty; he was covered with plaster dust, white with it, like a miller's boy. Mordecai put the flask to Sammy's lips, tilting it into his mouth. The burning stuff ran down his throat, warming him. He choked and gasped, but he could speak. "My arm . . ."

Mordecai looked down; Sammy's wrist was swollen to twice its size, and a great, knobby protrusion jutted out at one side. "Dear God!" Mordecai swore softly, and held the flask to Sammy's lips again. Sammy's head swam in a red haze; his arm hurt clear to the shoulder. A thought surfaced and faded away again, misty. The wagon rattled.

The thought was back again now, a thin point of a thought, sharp as a needle. He wet his lips. "Mommy and Dad . . . ?"

Mordecai bent close, his old eyes infinitely sad. He shook his head.

"They didn't make it, boy. . . . We're the only ones that made it. . . ." The needle stabbed; Sammy cried out. He began to sob, great, painful, adult sobs, hiccoughing like a drunk.

"There, boy," said Mordecai. "I'll take care of you. There now—cry it out. . . ."

The wagon rumbled and groaned, tossing them from side to side, roughly; it was old, and the wheels were loose. Sammy became aware that he lay in dampness; he had wet himself; weak tears of shame ran down his cheeks. The red sky pressed down upon the red emptiness in his head. He heard Mordecai speak to the driver, a question. Dimly he heard the answer: ". . . the Mechanics Pavilion. They're taking all the wounded to the Mechanics Pavilion."

"Joe," thought Sammy. "Joe . . . going skating . . ." He slept.

The horse plunged forward through the ruins.

## *Chapter 3*

Mabel flushed the toilet, flinching at the noise. Her bladder was weak; she had never been able to make it through a whole night; that was why the Savages always let her have the closest bedroom. Well, thank God, she thought, listening, at least she hadn't wakened anyone. An ungodly hour, after five, light already. She glanced in the little mirror over the washbasin, and stuck out her tongue. "You hag," she said, good-naturedly. One curl was coming out of its paper curler; she wrapped it again, winding it viciously tight as if to punish the vision of the mirror. She held her hands under the hot-water tap; ice cold. She dried them quickly and, as she hung up the towel, glanced out of the tiny window. The sky was a peculiar pea-green color; she stared at it. Just then the shock hit, with a noise like the splitting of the world, toppling the house down around her, and hurling Mabel backward into the bathtub, where she was wedged firmly, unhurt but powerless to move, while the tub danced and jogged on its fat claw legs, bumping into the shaking walls, tossing like a channel boat. The noise she heard was a horrible grinding, deep in the bowels of the earth, and a heavy knocking sound as though giants battered at the bathroom door; over all was a confused

wailing and shrieking and the deep tolling of bells. She was not religious, but had once heard an evangelist who had appeared on the same bill; now all she could think of was the Judgment Day.

It was over in seconds; nothing moved except the flapping shreds of pongee at the window; there was a sickening silence. The glass had blown out of the window and was all over the floor; water spouted from broken plumbing in three jets. The brass of the faucets was twisted into a tortured mess, and the basin hung crookedly from one bolt in the wall, water pouring from it. Water, too, lay in the bottom of the tub, cold against Mabel's flesh. The tub itself had spun around and was now right up against the door, blocking it. Mabel struggled, pulling herself up, standing in the inch of water on the tub floor, pounding on the closed door, bruising her fists. She saw that it was hopelessly buckled and twisted; a gap wide as her arm opened at one side, yet the door would not give. Through the gap was nothing, no room, no furniture, no face, nothing; only a thick dust, settling. Panic flooded her to bursting; she howled, hammering wildly at the door. "Laverne, my baby! Laverne! Ethel . . . Joe . . . Sammy! Laverne! Oh, God! Oh, God, they're dead—they're dead!" Her blows grew weaker, but she could not stop her shouting. She stood in the tub, wringing her hands, wailing over and over the demented litany. "Oh, God, my God, they're dead! Oh, God, my God, oh, Laverne!"

A voice spoke, harsh, from the window. "Lady! Hist, lady! Here—at the window!" A face appeared; the rungs of a ladder. Mabel turned toward it, still wailing. "Oh, for God's sake, lady, can it! This wall won't hold forever! Get over here!"

Another voice, behind, called out, exasperated. "Get hold of the cow, will you! Shut her up! This house'll go fast! Any minute! Shut up, cow!"

Mabel, shocked to silence by the abuse, stepped meekly out of the tub, feeling the floor give, sickeningly, under her step. She reached up like a sleepwalker and took the hands that were stretched down to her.

"Window's too high, for Christ's sake," the voice despaired. "Lady, stand on the toilet . . ." The arms pulled, muscles knotting. "Hold the ladder, down there . . . be ready to catch her!"

"I'm too fat!" gasped Mabel.

"Never mind," said the hoarse voice. And pulled her through, into the air outside.

The street was an inferno; the sky, reddened with flames, cast a

strange, unreal glow over all; it might have been some fantastic stage set. Stones, bricks, mortar, and rubble lay flung everywhere; a great crevice, jagged, alpine, bisected Geary Street; someone had set boards across it, a rough bridge. Dazed refugees teetered over it, funneling out on the other side, making a mob. A woman wept loudly; she was pushing a pram filled with dishes, pots, clothes, and incredibly, shoes, trying to maneuver it with one hand while the other held an infant by its two feet, upside down; it looked dead, if it was not a doll; Mabel could not tell. The pram was too wide; it would not pass over the plank bridge; the crowd behind, waiting for a footing, pushed it into the crevice; the woman, still holding the baby, leaped in after it; no one stopped to look. Mabel saw a man in long red winter underwear, carrying a gold-headed cane and wearing a top hat, followed by a woman in three fur coats; people snatched up valuables, frantic with fear, or ran out nearly naked; a few men were lathered, as though their beards had turned white, and women carried frying pans with half-cooked breakfasts congealing inside. Wild-eyed children clung to skirts, wailing and stumbling; babies slept peacefully at their fleeing mothers' breasts. Mabel stood in front of the Geary's stripped walls, wringing her hands, her face wet with tears, a plumpish figure in draggled peach lace with a Topsy-curled head, the rush of people dividing to go around her. She moved forward slowly, gazing down into the great pit of rubble that had been the Geary's insides; she put out a tentative foot; it did not reach the rubble mound below. She sat down at the edge, preparing to ease herself down into it. Someone snatched her arm from behind.

"You crazy, lady? . . . Come away—these walls'll come down any second! There's nothing left alive in there! Workers been in there already, looking . . . nothing!" Arms pulled her backward.

"My little girl . . . Ethel and Joe . . ."

"I know, lady . . . it's a shame . . ." She saw a smudged face; beneath the dirt it frowned in worry. "Look out . . . here she comes!"

He yanked her backward; the left wall tilted slowly, slowly; it came down with a hollow crash, sending up a geyser of dust and brickwork that settled slowly, making the mound into a hill. "Oh, my God!" whispered Mabel. "Dead? Are they all dead? Oh, my God . . ."

The man who had saved her stood beside her, irresolute, helpless. "I'm sorry, lady. Maybe . . ." He shrugged.

"Come on, Mack . . . there's a stable down here, some horses still left, and wagons . . . Got to get 'em . . ."



"Was there any come out of here?" asked Mabel's rescuer. "Did you see any survivors?"

"We took some wounded out, I think . . . can't rightly remember."

"Where'd they take 'em?"

A shrug. "Who knows?"

"Well, lady—sorry I can't help you. . . . Just ask around."

The other man spoke again. "Anybody that can get there is headed for the Ferry. You could try there."

Mabel clutched at him. "Who did you take out? Try to remember!"

"It was kids, I think, lady. Kids and an old man."

"Oh, my God! Thank you . . . thank you!" But they were gone.

There was no transportation; every wagon, cart, or buggy had been requisitioned for the wounded and the dead. It took Mabel an hour to reach Market Street on foot, and a half-day to walk to the Ferry Building where Market Street ended at the Bay. Fires raged on either side of Market Street; it was like walking between two fiery walls. The heat was intense; many people dropped from exhaustion, or were overcome by the smoke which hung like a black pall over all the downtown area. There were fissures in the road and piles of brick; the way was circuitous. Sometimes a wall fell in the path of the exodus, blocking the road and forcing the refugees to detour. Bits of burning wood fell on them, scorching great holes in their clothes and singeing their hair. In the gaping caverns of blown-down buildings, rats ran from the flames; sometimes, bold with terror, the creatures blundered into the feet of the refugees. Mabel, a woman who, at the sight of a mouse, jumped onto a chair, plodded on past even the largest rats, in a stricken apathy.

It was a torturing walk; Mabel's feet were bare and bleeding, for she had lost her mules when she was dragged through the window; her peach-colored robe was in shreds and charred about the shoulders, the blue-white flesh showing through; most of her paper curlers were gone and her yellow hair blew in snakes, Medusa-like, around her tear-wet face. She had had no food since the night before, and no water; the smoke clogged her mouth and nostrils and reddened her eyes; she felt nothing; her heart labored to the beat of her daughter's name. She could not stop, in the press of frantic people, even if she wanted to; she kept her head down, not to breathe the smoke, and set one foot in front of the other.

"The Bay . . . the Bay!" The sound moved like a sigh along the

line of derelict marchers. Mabel lifted her burning eyes. She saw, over the multitude of heads, incredibly, a narrow lane of blinding white sky and, below, a patch of blue, no bigger than a handkerchief. Her throat moved painfully; she sobbed.

They could not run, any of them, but running was in them, as the spirit is in the flesh; they surged slowly forward.

The wide windows of the Ferry Building were black with humanity, and a long line spilled backward from its open door. The whole mass of refugees came to a halt, staring at the widening picture of the Bay, beautiful, beckoning, with a sky above it that had known no bitter coverlet of smoke. Sobs and prayers rose all about; some, now that they had come so far and so bravely, collapsed onto the ground. The surging mass stepped over them, inching forward to join the long line that fed into the ferries and volunteer vessels. A nun, the white band of her wimple blackened and her eyebrows singed away, handed Mabel a dipperful of water, and another pressed a heel of bread into her hand; the Sisters had been working since just after the quake hit.

Mabel clawed at the black sleeve. "Sister . . . the wounded?"

"Oh, my dear," she said, her eyes tired beneath the scabby baldness of the burned brows. "My dear, they are everywhere . . . at St. Mary's, at Letterman's Hospital. Some they took to the Mechanics Pavilion, too . . . but they will all be brought here, once they are treated. They will all go to the refugee camp over there—" she pointed across the bay—"to Oakland. You have someone . . . ?"

Mabel nodded. "My little girl—my Laverne . . ."

"God bring you together, my dear. God will be with you. Have faith." The nun sketched a cross sign in the air, and passed on.

Wild rumors flew up and down the long waiting line. New York was in ashes, and the whole east coast covered by a tidal wave; the inland cities were split into deep canyons, and none were left alive; the Great Lakes had inundated the whole northern part of the country; some said, indeed, that it was the end of the world. Mabel heard it all without emotion; she had no room in her heart for anything but her child. Over and over she prayed silently to God, throwing in Sammy's name as well to show Him she was unselfish. "Surely He will hear me," she thought. "The Sister said He would . . . and I have never asked for anything before."

It was hard to wait, now they had come so far. But the small craft on the Bay were being held to carry the wounded, and there were only two ferries. The line moved so very slowly—by inches, it

seemed. Finally, Mabel found herself near the ferry gate; only a few people were ahead of her. They were policing the area now, counting off the people and not allowing panic.

A ferry worker shouted, "Eight more! There's room for eight more!" and he held up eight fingers, as if his co-worker were deaf. "Eight, and close the gate again!" The man began counting them off, slowly, putting aside those with children clinging to them. Mabel would be the last.

Mabel felt someone poke her, hard, between the shoulder blades, and a voice in her ear whispered hoarsely, "I'll give you a hundred dollars—change with me! Here it is—a hundred dollars!" And she felt a tight roll being shoved into her hand. She looked down, thunder-struck. It was green money, a lot of it! "Count it!" said the voice, urgently. "Go ahead . . . hurry!" She closed her hand on the roll of money, though she did not count it, and, as though impelled, stepped back to let him take her place. It was just in time; the gate closed behind him. She saw his back only; he was wearing two overcoats, one hanging dowdily above the other's hem.

No one noticed the exchange, strangely enough; the apathy among those waiting was dreadful; they could, in fact, barely put one foot in front of the other. Two women with children solemn at their sides had been turned away; they stood aside, just looking at the line. "Here," said Mabel. "Get in ahead of me. We'll be taken next." And she made room for them; they did not even thank her, they were dazed beyond courtesy. "Perhaps God saw," thought Mabel.

She reached into the bosom of her gown and pulled out a cord from which a little pouch hung; touring theatricals always expect to be caught in some disaster, though it rarely happens; it was her "stranding purse." The little pouch was thin; she had just the day before paid her rent; the hundred dollars (if it truly was so much) would help a lot, no matter what. Mabel was as practical as she could be in the hand-to-mouth existence that she lived; she would never have thought of not taking the offer, no player would; life was too chancy. And surely, too, it had been sent from God—for here was the other ferry! She moved forward through the gate after the two women with their children.

Already, by mid-afternoon, the city of Oakland had been transformed into a huge transit camp. Hundreds of tents could be seen from the pier, and an ocean of canvas stretched beyond. The town of Oakland had not suffered any but minor damage, and the entire city bent its efforts to succoring the desperate people of San Francisco.

Great kitchens were set up at every corner, and armies of volunteers had been working all day. Donations of clothing and blankets, beds and medicines were still arriving by train, and boatloads of refugees hourly swelled the population of the emergency hamlet along the shore.

Mabel, disembarking among the weary passengers, scanned the little knots of people who gathered before the tents and kitchens, as if she hoped to see her Laverne among the first sights to greet her eyes. Another nun appeared at her elbow, carrying a bowl of soup; all the refugees were being fed; it was extremely orderly.

"No, no," said Mabel. "I must find my daughter . . . she needs me."

"She will be taken care of," said the nun, kindly. "Come—eat. If you die, you will be no good to her at all."

"I'm not going to die," said Mabel, becoming angry. She pulled her arm from the other's grasp and took a step forward; her knees buckled, and she fell to the ground. The nun made a hasty sign, and Mabel was carried into a nearby tent. She remembered nothing else afterward, though she must have eaten. When she woke, it was full morning; she had slept eighteen hours. Someone had washed her and combed her hair; she wore a kind of smock, cotton, over her ragged robe, and the cot she lay on was clean. The same nun brought her coffee and buttered bread, and guided her to the emergency office. The woman behind the folding table shook her head. "We have hundreds of children," she said, her pencil poised. "Just tell me where she would have been picked up."

"Oh . . . the Geary Hotel, on Geary Street . . . we had rooms there."

The woman looked at her. "You must not expect much," she said. "The word is that that building was a total loss."

"But someone said . . ." Mabel's words trailed off, helplessly.

The woman looked up from her long sheet of paper. "You might look in the tents along the eastern shore—there." She pointed. "The wounded from that area were taken to the Mechanics Pavilion. Perhaps . . ." But there was pity in her eyes.

Mabel had to cross all the great expanse of tents to get to where she had been directed, past the corner kitchens, the emergency hospitals, past the ferry slip. She still had no shoes and her bruised feet ached; she stopped at the ferry gate and looked toward the devastated city across the water. Smoke hung still over it, low down, and a



few tongues of flame showed white in the sun. She heard a voice. "Pardon me—" She turned.

"Can you be . . . Mrs. Kelly . . . ?" A tall old man, his head bandaged like a Turk's, wearing the mate to her smock, stood above her, looking down intently into her face. "I am Mordecai—"

She put her hand to her throat, crying softly, "Mordecai Miller!"

He put out a hand to take her arm in a firm grip. "Your little girl is safe," he said. "And the little Sammy Savage as well." He felt her sag beneath his hand and put his arm around her. "Come, my dear—I will take you to them."

## *Chapter 4*

After the earthquake, Mabel said that God had led her to the children. In a way, of course, it must have been true, for the odds were against their finding one another in those dreadful days. Still, when Sammy pictured God upon his heavenly throne, he wore, always, the face (and even the toga) of Mordecai Miller.

Sammy hated school, though no one could help liking Los Angeles—palm trees growing out of the sidewalk, imagine! They had settled there; it seemed the only thing to do, for their next engagement would have been in that sleepy, sunny city. Mordecai, of course, could fill his engagement, but the management had contracted for three Savages and a blonde little girl, not a boy-and-girl act, hastily rehearsed. No one could help being sorry for the victims of the earthquake, but business was business, after all. It was admitted that the boy, at least, showed promise, but the house manager, shrugging and spreading his arms in a gesture of regret, said, "Lady, my hands are tied." Sammy thought that they did not look it, but there was no question that indeed they were empty.

He had been kind, though, the manager, in his way; he sent Mabel to one of the new nickelodeon theaters, where they were looking for someone to play the piano. A tiny box of a place with folding chairs, it had once been a cigar store, a family business. It had prospered, though, beyond the family's wildest dreams, crowded at every show, and turning them away; they could afford that innovation, a piano

accompaniment. Mabel was ill-paid, barely enough to keep them together, and she worked long hours; it was not possible to leave two children alone all day in their poky little flat; she had enrolled them in the nearest school. It was before the days of regulations and truancy laws; Laverne had once attended a school in Mississippi, a whole season it had been, when the showboat played there, but Sammy had never set foot in one. They put him in the fifth grade, among older children, for he could read like a whiz, even Shakespeare, and knew his multiplication tables, and more geography than most, having traveled. Still, he was not happy; the other boys and girls, in spite of their greater age, seemed childish beyond belief, their heads woolly with thoughts he did not comprehend. He made no friends, though he quickly became the class clown and enjoyed a certain popularity; he could not have borne it otherwise.

Sammy was restless; he learned quickly, even penmanship, correcting the backhand scrawl he had learned from Ethel, long ago; she had been his first teacher, huddling with him under dim gas lamps in dressing-rooms between shows, or passing the time on the endless train rides between towns. She had had more education than Joe, for the Savages had preserved a tradition, centuries old, of elitism; they no longer knew where it had sprung from, but it came in fact from that first scholar, Sir Hercules, the King's Fool. Sammy's head, from much listening, reading, and travel, was a ragbag of knowledgeable oddments; he even knew a little Latin, and had been set to read it along with the eighth-graders. Was it any wonder that he was always a bit ahead, with a half-hour or so to spare? Was it strange that he invented mocking rhymes, mimicked the teacher behind her back, and stared dreamily out of the window? His report card was an anomaly—all A's except a big red D—for deportment; once he got a zero! His ears were boxed till they rang, and his knuckles rapped smartly with rulers; regularly he was caned, in the principal's office; it did no good, he was irrepressible. He knew the discipline of the theater and no other; he accepted his punishment and reaped his reward: laughter.

Laverne, on the other hand, with her fragile, blue-veined prettiness, her perfect curls, her starched petticoats and pastel pinafores copied from the fashion plates, was a teacher's pet; she was not so clever as Sammy, though she was two years older; she sat in the front row, with her long legs cramped beneath a third-grade desk.

Sammy still adored Laverne; she was sister, sweetheart, playmate, all in one. He loved Aunt Mabel, too; her plump, rather tatty

fairness spelled comfort to him; she was unfailingly kind. Mordecai he simply worshiped; was there ever such an idol for a small stage boy? Mordecai was not nearly so old as the venerable image he projected; he had immense vitality and an unlimited fund of stage lore. The boy became his apprentice, more than willing; he spouted Shakespeare by the hour, a miniature Booth, Ethel's dark eyes flashing in his young face. He had not forgotten his parents, but, as children will, he had placed them in some secret box of his heart, closed to the world and even to himself.

Mabel and Mordecai had agonized over Sammy's fate; they had tried, but unsuccessfully, to find some of the Savage kin after the earthquake, even placing an ad in the personal column of the new show-business paper, *Variety*, and inquiring at all the agents' offices in Chicago. "There are Savages all over the South, and the East as well," said Mordecai. "There must be. . . . I remember old Sam, when I was a small boy. He had so many children . . . and there were others, too—the New Orleans lot, and the showboat folks." But there was never an answer, never a word of those elusive kin. Sammy was just as pleased; though he never said so, he had prayed to stay just where he was, with Mabel, Laverne, and Mordecai; it was the life he knew. Even school could be endured; it would not last forever.

Mordecai had finished out his tour, going on to Portland and Seattle; then he had come back to Los Angeles, to settle in. The climate was perfect; he had a little saved; he was getting too old to tour. All of these reasons pulled him; besides, the new film companies were beginning to move out here, drawn by the cloudless skies and the low taxes; Mordecai could pick up a little cash now and then, posing, as he called it, in front of the camera. What an easy life, and no strain on an aging throat!

The new film industry was still in its infancy, though there were several companies in the flatlands of New Jersey, in Pennsylvania, New York, and Chicago. The Edison Company, Biograph, Vitagraph, and Essanay were all showing huge profits already; the new nickelodeon theaters were everywhere, and always crowded to capacity, especially in the larger cities, with their semiliterate immigrant audiences; poor as they were, even they could afford a nickel!

A film company from Chicago had opened a studio of sorts in an old stable just outside of town; there was another in a barn in Burbank. Several smaller concerns, operating on shoestrings, filmed in the streets, or paid tiny rents for the use of large backyards. On the

beach at Santa Monica, Mordecai mimed Moses facing the Red Sea—two reels of Biblical action, filmed in one afternoon, and he received fifty dollars; he counted it a fortune. He had already “done” his Julius Caesar and his Lear, the one outside City Hall, the other upon a large hill near the town dump, with a wind machine bought cheap from Augustin Daly in New York (for in Los Angeles one might wait a half-year for a good storm). These had been shorter still, barely four minutes, and had been filmed in almost as short a time. Mordecai had been the only actor, and each thespian exercise had gleaned him twenty dollars; at that rate he would soon be rich! These engagements, or, as he called them, posings, had as yet been few and far between; he was still, much of the time, “at leisure,” as actors say. But Mordecai was curiously content; for the first time in his long life, he had a family.

They had fallen, gradually and, as it were, accidentally, into an easy and rather pleasant routine in the months after the earthquake. Drawn together by the disaster, Mabel and Mordecai had become friends—odd and mismatched, but affectionate. Mordecai, after winding up his tour, had taken lodgings near the little flat that was their home; he had boarding privileges, but, after a bit, had made arrangements with his landlady waiving them, at a reduction, for he took his meals with his new “family.”

Mabel made breakfast for the children and saw them off to school; then she set out for her job in the nickelodeon theater, an all-day grind. When the children came home from school, Mordecai was there, waiting for them. They took a scratch meal together, delighting their old-young hearts: thick sandwiches, grapes and oranges; milk shakes; chocolates; rich cakes, poured over with heavy sweet cream; bottles of fizzy iced soda; toast and jam; tinned salmon, kippers, and beans. Never anything cooked, though Mabel clucked, protesting. They thrived; Mordecai’s complexion took on a ruddy hue, and the children gained inches, though perhaps the sun helped; it was always shining then, in the pre-smog days.

In the evening they usually went to Mabel’s nickelodeon, happily sitting on the backless benches, watching the flickering shadows on the makeshift screen, listening to Mabel’s maudlin, tinkling notes and the whirr of the projector from the rear. Sometimes, if they had seen the bill too many times, they would go around the corner into the next street, to a competitor nickelodeon which was showing another series of films. They would sit through all the showings, in the fusty darkness, till the last; then they would pick up Mabel and all



walk home together, sometimes stopping on the way for a frankfurter on a roll, the newest taste sensation, or a Mexican tamale, sweetly burning their mouths, or even, now and then, that expensive treat, a gigantic grilled prawn, washed down by that heavenly new beverage, Coca-Cola. It was a childish heaven of gustatory delights; Sammy remembered those glorious tastes for years, long after he had forgotten the films that he saw, and the anonymous actors, some of them later to become famous, who acted in them.

They saw—over and over again—*The Great Train Robbery*, with the outlaw shooting a gun off right in the audience's face, terrifying! They saw *Cinderella*, in color—sad, watery hues like a child's painting book; the ever popular *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a tear-jerker; these were all Edison Company productions. Biograph presented the great Joseph Jefferson in scenes from his tremendous stage success, *Rip Van Winkle*; from Vitagraph came *A Gentleman of France* and *Raffles*; the most eagerly awaited of all was the sumptuous spectacle *Ben Hur* in three reels, the longest to date, made by the Kalem Company, which had just opened a studio right here—in Los Angeles. On Christmas Eve a great treat, *The Night Before Christmas*—Santa and his reindeer on the rooftops! Besides which were innumerable news films; one might see events of world-shaking importance, happening practically before one's eyes! Oh, they were exciting days, no mistake.

None of the actors in these early films was billed; Mordecai recognized many of them, pointing them out to all who would listen, his rich voice rolling above the tinkling piano, folk shushing and giggling in the dark; he was oblivious. "There's William Sorrelle," he would say, booming. "I played with him in two-a-week stock in Columbus." Or, "My God . . . Sidney Olcott! He can't act his way through a paper bag!" He guessed the identity of the already famous Biograph Girl, too; she was Florence Turner, daughter of an old actor friend. "She ought to sue for billing. What a draw! They only pay the poor child eighteen dollars a week, and she does wardrobe, too. It's a disgrace!" Florence Turner, not yet out of her teens, was in every Biograph picture, or nearly; she had a pure oval face, high cheekbones, a round chin, wide-spaced eyes, and a mobile mouth; as "Baby Flo, the Child Wonder Whistler," she had been touring America since she was four. And now Florence Turner, the Biograph Girl, was the first big star of motion pictures; she played everything from Little Eva to Juliet, with excursions into Sheherazade and Anna Karenina. Sammy, along with most of the audience, was head

over heels in love with her; he sent away, to the Biograph studio in Flatbush, for an album of photographs of his ideal girl; he had saved his lunch money for three weeks! The photographs were heads only, in different poses, hair-dos, and, most importantly, expressions. Florence was depicted showing sadness, determination, piety, mirth, and horror; Sammy and Laverne spent hours before the mirror striving to duplicate these emotions, but secretly, for Mordecai had all the stage player's scorn for the artifices of "posing."

For all his contempt, Mordecai was beginning to do very well out of this "posing." Essanay, Kalem, and the new IMP company had opened studios in and around Los Angeles; there was a very large one on a rooftop in the heart of the city. Here two or even three motion pictures could be filmed at once, just by throwing up a few canvas walls bought cheap from a stranded stage company, investing in a few more cameras, and luring directors and actors from the East. Very soon Mordecai was making as many as two pictures a week, and earning nearly as much as he had brought in as a headliner in vaudeville. He very cannily held back from joining one of the companies, where he would receive a weekly salary of perhaps forty dollars at the most; he continued to freelance, playing every venerable ancient in history and romance. All of these pictures were processed, cut, and released within weeks after they were made; soon Mordecai began to see himself on the screen at Mabel's nickelodeon house, where he chuckled richly at a stray drapery lifted by the wind or clucked deprecatingly at a black shadow athwart his face. "No attention to detail, these people! Don't know how to make a picture," he would complain loudly. "Need a director—and an assistant!" And he would nod sagely, his pale eyes keen with thoughtful speculation.

In those far-off days there was little or no competition for parts; actors were at a premium, and directors were actors who volunteered for the job. As, years later, the avant-garde film-maker, for art's sake, used the non-actor, the man in the street, so in those early days, in extremity, with no one to fill the role, a rag-seller, a delivery boy, or even a bar-fly was collared and pushed before the camera. "Grin!" would be the command, or "Scratch your head! No, not like that—scratch hard. . . . Good!" And out he would be pushed, the rag-seller or drunk, with his grin or his scratched head and a fortune—perhaps a dollar!—in his fist. Stars were not discovered thus, to be sure, or not often, though there are tales of it, as legendary as the Minotaur. But many of the idle or curious of Los Angeles earned their quarter or half-dollar for an afternoon crowd scene. Sammy and

Laverne, privy to the filming at many of the studios, had picked up an extra dime or so after school, and once in a while a quarter for Saturday shooting (children, of course, were paid less than adults). Mabel forbade them to work in the mornings for such a pittance, and miss school as well, or they would have haunted the studios.

It was inevitable that Mordecai, with his formidable background, his extraordinary presence, and his air of omniscience, should fall heir to a director's megaphone. After all, who could have known more about Shakespeare than he, who had played the Bard nearly every day of his life? The play was *Richard III*, condensed to two reels; Mordecai's role, a minor one, had been cut. Mordecai, in the most courteous and kingly way possible, had given the company to understand that he was not leaving without being paid; he stood watching the scene being filmed, as calm and implacable as one of the yet uncarved faces on Mount Rushmore.

The actor playing Richard, Kyrle Bellew, from the stage, too, was doubling as director; it was the scene where the hunchback, alone and covetous, tries out the empty throne, a "little gem" of a moment. The camera was not grinding; he could not get it right. Over and over he went through it, shaking his head and looking disgusted. "It's not good," he said, finally. "We'll have to get back to it."

Mordecai spoke up. "You're on the wrong foot, my boy. Try the left one when you step up on the dais." The actor, startled, tried it; it worked. And that was how Mordecai became a director. "Two hundred dollars," he said, when approached; it was an unheard-of sum. "It will take a whole week," said Mordecai, haughtily. "It is Shakespeare, after all."

That picture, too, marked the debuts of the children, for their friend Mordecai cast them as the Princes in the Tower. It was an inauspicious beginning, only one scene, though a close-up of Sammy's childish face, terrified, smeary with real tears, moved strong men to curses and their women to sobs.

It was not long before the two children were appearing regularly in those bits where juveniles were necessary to the plot; Mordecai used them wherever possible, and sometimes sent them to other studios as well. Sammy was cast as Prince Arthur in *King John*; he liked this, for it gave him an opportunity to say Shakespeare's lines; it was some time before any director—even Mordecai—realized that unaccountably moving lips with no words heard distracted from the silent action. Then, with two princes under his belt, he was given the part of *The Little Lame Prince*, which became a greater favorite, though it

was only a one-reeler. Neither he nor Laverne missed many days of school, however, for these larger parts were few and far between; most films they appeared in could be shot in an afternoon.

Mordecai was not enormously talented as a director, no more so than those other fledglings of the infant industry. But he did have common sense, often, alas, lacking amid the haste and confusion of film-making. He could look into the camera and see when a subject's head was being cut off by the lens angle, or when a tree blocked the action. More importantly, he had a knack of bringing out honest emotions, often replete with real tears, in his players. He became known in "the trade" as "The King of the Heartstrings."

None of Mordecai's early films has survived; they have gone the way of those others, made before the halcyon days began—the one-reel comedies of sour, starched Flora Finch and of John Bunny, that extravagantly bulbous, Dickensian figure who dominates so many of the old still photos; Marie Doro, whose provocative charm still looks out of her impossibly huge dark eyes; the first cowboy films that starred Broncho Billy and his nameless steed.

The players' names are listed in fading print in some of the old leaflets, once sold in the nickelodeons; still portraits star the yellowed pages, as evocative as pressed flowers. Master Sammy Savage's name is there, and his sad, urchin's eyes beckon beneath a long, curled Fauntleroy wig. There is a picture of him, too, as *Oliver Twist*, more comfortable in the theatrical rags and the crushed street boy's cap. It was not a comic face, not then; it might have been painted by Del Sarto or even Leonardo. He was cast in pathetic roles, and mimed them with a proper solemnity. It was only at school, that detestable place, that he unaccountably, and forever, played the fool.

## Chapter 5

Teacher, Miss Pugh (pronounced like the one in church), was a dead ringer for Flora Finch, though she did not know it, for she had never been inside a nickelodeon. "Nice" people did not go; such entertainments were for the "others"—yet to be called "the proletariat." The nickelodeons were thought to be firetraps, not without



reason, for the film of those days was highly flammable; there had been a dreadful holocaust in Paris in the last century, when well over a hundred people of fashion had lost their lives in a great fire that had gutted one of the Ministry palaces; it had been an exhibition of the new invention, drawing all the sophisticates of the Parisian art world. It would take the motion-picture industry many years to live this down; meanwhile it was fast achieving an undreamed-of popularity, soon to cover the world with the glittering enchantment of its shadowy superlife.

If Miss Pugh did not know her double, there was hardly one of her pupils who did not, though only our theater children knew Flora Finch's name. Miss Pugh (and Flora Finch) were attenuated, scrawny presences in old-fashioned pompadour and shirtwaist; their lips were thin, their noses high, and their eyes as pale and watery as the sea. To the enduring poor, Flora had all the shabby virtues of their betters; she was fearsome, but the movies made her laughable. Sammy performed the same function for his schoolfellows. Let Miss Pugh turn her back, and there stood a miniature, stiff-backed teacher in decent school-boy serge, cowlicked instead of pompadoured, chin tucked in, neck long as an eel, chalk in hand, with the little finger extended, sign of a lady. Let her leave the room—oh, joy!—and the steps minced, the elbows juttied, the bosom pouted, the eyes blanched like peeled grapes; the room rang with laughter, happy and cruel. "Cheese it, here comes crackers!" from another wag, and Sammy would sink down, red and breathless, into his seat while the real Miss Pugh entered smartly into an electric silence.

Sammy did not know it, but Miss Pugh entertained a certain regard for her two exotic pupils. She knew that they came of "theatrical folk," and that Sammy was an orphan. "Just think of it," she said. "The boy so bright—quite unusual and stimulating—and the girl so pretty, like a storybook child!" She remarked this often to her friends; for she had friends, though her pupils would not have had it so—a librarian lady, one-quarter Blackfoot, who wore native jewelry and championed the cause of the True American; an untidy musician who played second violin in the Burbank String Quartet; a clairvoyant who had had a slim volume of verse printed only a decade ago. "Quite a nice little woman," continued Miss Pugh, for she had met Mabel when the children were enrolled. "Plays the organ, I believe. Their sole support, a shame . . ."

Sammy loved the laughter; an unreasoning response, quite different from his wanting to do well before the camera, or to earn

Mordecai's approval for a fair reading of a Shakespearean line. His mimicry was unerring; in his second year at the school, he had been put into the eighth grade—not long to go now; he was more restless and bored than ever before; he grew careless.

Miss Pugh had set the classroom to written work and left the room; only for a moment, her corsets were pinching. Quick as a flash, Sammy took her place at the desk, rapping with a ruler for attention; the class grinned expectantly. Delicately he wriggled, settling his "shimmy"; a delighted roar. He craned a long neck to one side, a long finger crept under his top shirtwaist button, slyly adjusting a shoulder strap; another roar; his sea-pale eyes glared; his nose went higher; he stared them down; they adored it. He put a languid hand to his flat chest and, with a pained expression, belched sadly; his audience was wild. He rapped again twice, picked up the chalk, remembered to thrust out the little finger, turned to the blackboard; a dreadful silence fell. He turned, brows raised, still in character, and saw Miss Pugh's eyes, wide with shock, upon him. She saw it all, in a flash, the ladylike finger like the sting of a wasp, a secret small shame. Sammy, riveted, watched the pale eyes. From the first row came a yelp of laughter, smothered: Laverne, the storybook child. Something naked leaped behind the eyes for a begging instant; then the sea water washed over them, cold. "Samuel, you will report to the principal's office after school."

The incident had occurred early in the school year; it was never referred to by word or deed, but a subtle change came over the classroom. Or perhaps not subtle, but gradual; by midterm an outsider would not have recognized Miss Pugh's domain. Sammy, unaccountably, had long since desisted from his first "turn"; he had gone on to the principal, the visiting music teacher, the custodian. There were other, grosser surrogate Miss Pughs; the entire class felt impelled to imitate her, she was now fair game. She need not, now, turn her back, much less leave the room; catcalls pierced the quiet; chalk dust rose in clouds, erasers flew. For these were no actor children, their persecution took simpler, more vulgar forms. It began to be said that Miss Pugh could no longer rule, that she "lacked discipline." She grew fearful, for jobs were in short supply; she boxed ears till her palm burned, the ruler whacked twenty times a day, she shouted to drown them out; every now and again she cringed; at the end of the day she drew a long, fluttering breath in the empty room, and wrung her hands; her heart beat wildly against the whalebone of her stays, like a bird against the cage bars. The principal, a kindly

man, advised her "to come down harder on them." She flinched and answered, "I will try."

School buildings such as hers have gone the way of trolleys and asafetida bags, but in Miss Pugh's day they were standard. The desks were oak, ink-stained and scarred, though they were really quite new; incredibly small they were, too, and cramping to the students' growing bones; the teacher's desk was huge, a sea of stern order. The walls were oak as well, paneled to shoulder height, the windows set high, niggardly of light, and never opened. A gas fixture hung baldly over the door; medieval shadows played across the childish round cheeks and lurked in the dusty corners. In the center of the room was a huge black stove. In this climate it was seldom cool enough to warrant a fire, but, by some strange process of official ruling, the stove was always lit, sending rivulets of sweat to creep clammily down beneath the high collars and starched pinafores. Not till April was it permissible to leave it unlit. One day, sometime in March, Sammy sat, halfway back, scrunched down in his seat, his geography book, the largest, propped on his knees and resting upon the desk edge; it was stiflingly hot and airless; the stove roared. It was study period, for the quarterly tests came tomorrow; he was reading *Twelfth Night*, a slim, leatherbound volume printed for actors, with the Colley Cibber directions in the margins. The play had been Ethel's favorite, for in it was the only Shakespeare heroine she knew, having once made an engaging Viola in a short-lived Fair Day tour. He had set himself to studying Malvolio, for Mordecai called it a better test of acting than Hamlet. Such excursions in reading were forbidden, of course, no matter that he would get straight hundreds on his tests.

All about him was classroom silence; that is, innumerable rustlings, sighs, coughs, and shuffling of feet, like an army of mice beneath the floorboards, growing bold. Outside the afternoon beckoned; not that one could see it; only a scrap of unbearable blue showed through the high windows, but now and then a pane rattled; March was true to itself, even in Los Angeles. The door opened, sending a gust of air that blew papers to the floor and chilled the sweat on the children's backs. It was the principal; an unheralded visit, checking. Miss Pugh trembled and stood, her knees creaking from disuse; the class stood with her, at attention, like little soldiers; *Twelfth Night* slipped to the floor, its slight weight loud in the hushed atmosphere. Sammy made to reach for it; Miss Pugh stayed him with raised hand. "You may retrieve your property later, Samuel."

The principal asked a few questions, clearing his throat, glanced at a book or two, would not meet Miss Pugh's anxious eye. "Chilly in here," he said, surprisingly. "Better poke up the fire. Don't want consumptions, ha-ha." He opened the stove door, flinching a little at the blast of heat, poked about in the red maw, and shut it again. "Well—everything seems to be in order. You will continue." But then the bell rang; dismissal. The principal gently guided Miss Pugh out of the room, holding close, earnest conversation. She stood at the door, holding it open as the children filed out, still in martial step, as was the custom.

"What did you drop, Doppus?" hissed Laverne in the hall. "My Shakespeare," Sammy answered expertly, out of the corner of his mouth. Monitors, mean-eyed and important, watched them on their military way, to the edge of the gravel that marked the grubby school-yard.

On the sidewalk Laverne and Sammy lingered.

"You going back for it?"

"'Course," said Sammy. "It was Ethel's. And anyway, she said I could." None of the children ever named Miss Pugh, or any other teacher, among themselves; it showed them too much courtesy.

"You'll catch it, though," said Laverne smugly. "Want me to come back with you?"

Sammy shrugged. "Come if you like."

The yard was empty, the halls deserted. The heavy oak door was shut; Sammy rapped on it, tentatively. There was no answer; he knocked again, more loudly this time. Then he turned the knob; no teacher. They tiptoed in. Sammy's mouth curved in a smile. "We're in luck," he whispered.

He was bending over the desk, straightening up, book in hand, when Miss Pugh entered. The children stared: her face looked strange, as if it had been struck. She pulled herself together, visibly, and bore down on the children. "Give it to me!" she demanded, holding out her hand.

Sammy quickly put it behind his back. "You said I could come back for it. It only dropped!"

"No outside material is allowed in study hall!" Her hand was still out for it; even in two years' time, Sammy had been thus much trained; he put the little *Twelfth Night* in it. She moved away.

Sammy, alarmed, cried out. "What are you going to do with it? It was my mother's!"



The "was" hit Miss Pugh after she had opened the stove door, after she had thrown the book in. All three stood frozen in horror.

Laverne found her voice, choking a little. "It was Ethel's! She was killed in the earthquake!"

The fire door stood open still, the flames whitening and flaring as they touched the flimsy leather. Miss Pugh, white-faced, turned and thrust her arm into the stove, bringing out the book. Little flames licked around its edges and danced up her sleeve to the elbow. She wrapped her heavy skirt around them both, book and arm, for a moment, her face still as a stone. Then, unwrapping the folds, she handed the book to Sammy. An obscene smell clung about them all, clogging their noses.

"Take it!" She thrust the book at him. He saw the edges, scorched into a black mourning border, and the sleeve of her dress black, too, and curling in fragile wisps; her hand was brilliantly colored, scarlet to purple and iridescent; they could almost see it blistering.

"Take it!"

He took the book.

"And now get out! Get out!" Her voice rose to a shriek.

The children, not daring to look at her, tiptoed out, closing the heavy door. It made a hollow sound as it shut, a final sound.

Sammy held the book, still warm, to his skinny chest, too stunned to think or speak. The two children stood irresolute in the corridor, shifting from foot to foot; no one came by; it was like a lost lane somewhere.

Laverne took his hand. She whispered, "Come." She led him to the door again. It was thick, shiny oak, hard, looking like ice. Halfway up was a glass pane, divided in four; they could just see through, stretching.

Miss Pugh sat at her desk, head in her arms upon it. Her shoulders shook.

"She's crying!" said Laverne.

"Why?" whispered Sammy.

"I guess her hand hurts," said Laverne.

Sammy left school at the end of that semester, and Laverne with him. She had not finished, but both children were beginning to get parts, a lot of parts, and they were earning their keep; it was 1908, and motion pictures were off already on the roller-coaster up, up, into a diamond-starred sky.

Two years after, and Sammy was growing too fast, but still in boy

parts; he almost bumped into Miss Pugh one day a block from the new Keystone studios. "Pardon—" he began. "Oh—Miss Pugh!"

She was just the same, even to her clothes, except that she looked smaller, for Sammy had grown tall. "It's little Samuel Savage, isn't it?" Miss Pugh smiled; he had never seen her so before; her face seemed to diffuse into itself, as if the colors ran.

They talked for a moment, as two equals, though Sammy was not yet twelve. She had seen him in some movie or other, for almost all the nickelodeons had been replaced by respectable theaters, and the onus was gone. "You were very good," she said. "And little Laverne . . . I had a soft spot for her. For you, too, Samuel. In fact—for all the class of that year." Her pale eyes took on a dreamy look; perhaps she had learned it from the motion-picture actresses, so popular already. "In fact," she said, her voice going husky, "that was the nicest class I ever taught. They're not like that now . . . the new generation is getting so rude." Her words trailed off, feeble. "Yes," she said, as they parted, "it was quite the nicest class. . . ."

## Chapter 6

If Sammy had grown fast, Laverne, two years older, had thoroughly changed. Though Mabel dressed her, still, in ruffles and pinafores, she was no longer a little girl; she was nubile, and almost, but not quite, beautiful. She still had her look of extreme fragility; fine bones, pale, pale skin with the blue veins branching at the temples, and the very neat features of a French doll. But her small mouth had a discontented droop and there was something wrong with her eyes, something too large and round for innocence; she could stare like a cat, soullessly; it was discomfiting. "Whore's eyes," said Mordecai to himself, and cast her as the young Salome.

It was not a popular motion picture; the wicked ladies had not yet come into their own on the screen. But if Laverne could be said to be good in anything, she was good in that little film; quite by accident, Mordecai's *Salome* became a study in decadence; raw, cheaply produced, vulgarly mounted, it had a strange vitality, and created a little stir in "artistic" circles which up to that time had ignored the

new industry. It did little for Laverne, however, for where was another role like the Judean princess? Laverne had never fared as well as Sammy in the childish parts, though she had played *Elsie Dinsmore* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* in the years after the pair had left the schoolroom; her talent was small, and the large screen showed it up. And now she was betwixt and between, and far too tall for her old parts, though Mabel did not think so.

Mabel had become one of the first of that dreadful breed, the professional stage mother. Now that there were more than a half-dozen studios in operation, Mabel haunted them; like a hungry lioness, she thrust her tall blonde cub under the noses of directors and into the paths of cameramen. Much of the shooting was done on location; they could not bar the set to her. She was not obnoxious; as the unfortunate Miss Pugh had remarked, she was "a nice little woman." She persisted, with Laverne, dumb as a dormouse, in tow. They saw her coming, the directors and the producers, and after a time they did not shrug and turn away, but swept an appraising glance over the young girl and said, "Well—not today, but try me later in the week." She was always there, rather earlier than later, and, surprisingly often, the reply, second time around, was "All right—get her over to wardrobe . . . and be back on the set at two." Laverne, under Mabel's management, appeared in over a hundred pictures, all one-reelers, all less than unforgettable, in the space of two years. It was a horrid, grueling grind for both of them; they rose at the crack of dawn, rode miles of trolley track, walked long blocks of hard pavement, waited endlessly in the dusty heat, and smiled until their faces cracked with it. At night Laverne went early to bed—for her beauty sleep—her nerves soothed by a hot rum toddy, while Mabel sipped her own noggin, unheated, over the ironing board, ruffles being what they were. She had long since abandoned her job in the nickelodeon; indeed, most neighborhoods had abandoned the nickelodeons in favor of the larger and more sumptuous houses where the prices changed to a dime in the evenings and the seats had both arms and backs. Mabel might have made more money now, as pianist, but she chose to gamble on Laverne's career; so far it had paid off quite well, though Sammy brought in more money. Mabel would have been willing to fight for Sammy, too; by now she thought of him as her own son, or nearly. But there was no need; boy actors were few and far between, unlike girl performers, who already glutted the market, after so few years. There was even a demand for Sammy's services; he had appeal for the audiences and he was easy for directors to work

with; the only difficulty was that he was growing so fast; already, at thirteen, he was taller than most of the actresses who played his mother! "Make hay while the sun shines, my boy," said Mordecai. And Sammy did; he never turned down a part, sandwiching them in, and sometimes running between studios, shooting two pictures in one day.

They were all very busy indeed in those years; sometimes it seemed as though they had not even the leisure to draw breath. The old days of camaraderie were gone; it was only in the late evening, after a hurried supper, that the friends could gather, over their rums or their whiskies, to talk or reminisce; sometimes, even then, they were too tired to do more than sink gratefully into chairs (except for Mabel, at the ironing-board) and sip the rejuvenating drinks. "Nectar, my dear Mabel, nectar!" And Mordecai would raise his glass to her.

One such evening it was that Mordecai's step was light on the stairs, his rap at the door played a little tune, and his eye held a frosty gleam. "Let's have a second all round, old girl," he said, filling the glasses. "It will do no harm for once, and I have something to celebrate! Let's drink to my new home . . . and yours!"

He much enjoyed their puzzled looks, for even wan Laverne had sat up straighter in her cocoon of blankets on the bed; he took another long swig before he went on. "My friends, I have bought a house! Don't know why I haven't done it before. Getting richer all the time. Why rot in this hole?" It was by no means a hole, and Mabel considered it quite fancy; this flat was the best by far they had ever lived in, a whole floor and decently furnished; even Mordecai's studio on the floor below was spacious and light. He waved away her bristling looks. "Well, it's not too bad here, as these furnished places go . . . but why pay rent forever? Why not have something of my own for once, I say? Look—here is the deed."

"Beverly Hills—where's that?" asked Mabel, reading the long sheet.

"It's that stretch of hills just behind the new piece of flatlands—the section they call Hollywood. All that area is going for a song . . . studios going up on it like mushrooms. This place I bought is no distance at all. Fall out of bed and into work, eh?" He chuckled richly in his chest, pleased with himself. "House is brand new, too . . . part of a development. But zoned—four acres. It's a good buy. Place has twenty rooms."

"Twenty rooms!" Any one of the three might have said it; cer-



tainly they stared, all of them. Did anyone but a king live in twenty rooms?

"They've cut roads, too, and done a lot of landscaping already," he went on. "But I'll leave most of it natural. Woods all round about there . . . plenty of big trees. Place will look like a park." His eyes got a faraway look. "I think I ought to have a fountain. I always liked fountains. And hedges—and a gazebo, like they have in England. I'll have a gazebo. . . ."

"But what will you do with twenty rooms?" asked Mabel rather breathlessly, putting the iron back on the side of the stove; she could not listen to such rarefied news and iron all at once. "No one needs twenty rooms."

"Well," said Mordecai, waving his hand airily, "for servants—and guests." His lordly gaze swept over them; Sammy's mouth was stretched wide in a knowing smile, and his eyes crinkled. Mordecai shook a long finger at him.

"I am not jesting, my boy. I am deadly serious. I mean to live well in my last years. I'm famous already, and getting rich. We're all rich, comparatively speaking!" He pointed the finger at Mabel. "You! You know very well you're rolling in money!" He shrugged his shoulders. "In a manner of speaking, of course . . . But you certainly needn't wear yourself out with all this ironing and the rest of it. You're in the poverty habit, that's all. The poverty habit!" He waved his kingly hand again, consigning all Mabel's work to some nether place, some dim closet. "Get a maid to do that sort of thing . . . you can afford it!"

Mabel's mouth hung open like a guppy's; she felt the resemblance and closed it with a snap; his words had shaken her. She took a sip of her untouched rum for courage, and said, "You may be right, Mordecai. I may have enough money to live a little better . . . but I don't know . . ." And she shook her head dolefully. "You know how it is with us in the profession . . . we have to think of a rainy day."

"There'll be no rainy days out here in California, my girl," said Mordecai. "This business is in its infancy, and growing fast. Every one of us will get rich. Every one who is in on the ground floor. Even that girl—" And he pointed his finger, suddenly, and almost accusingly, at Laverne, on the bed. ". . . even that girl is going to be a star!"

Laverne gulped audibly; Mabel did not even protest his tone, so caught up was she in his oratory; as for Sammy, stars already shone in his dark eyes.

They listened while Mordecai extolled the young film industry, the climate, the burgeoning town and its adjunct, the suburb of Hollywood; they nodded when he counted over the number of new studios, the trainloads of producers and cameramen, the small but steady influx of stage people. "There's new money, too. Coal money, newspaper money—it's coming in from all directions. The real-estate people know it—look at all the new developments! This—" and he tapped the deed paper—"this is not the only one! Now is the time!" He spoke with a flourish in his voice, and, not to make an anticlimax, sank royally into a chair and reached for his whiskey and soda. He leaned back.

"Now, this is what I have in mind, my dears," he said, beaming genially upon them all. "As you've pointed out, twenty rooms is more than ample for my needs. I want you all to come and live with me!"

Mabel opened her mouth and shut it again as his finger once more pointed at her.

"You, my dear Mabel, shall be my housekeeper!"

"Oh, but I have to . . . make the rounds!"

"Well, Mabel, that's a matter of time, surely. The girl is growing. You cannot go everywhere with her—not for much longer. Handle her affairs, yes. See that she gets a good salary, yes. See that she doesn't sign the wrong papers. As a matter of fact, my dear, you might make a good agent for us all. . . ." He narrowed his eyes, measuring her; Mordecai was very full of himself this evening. "But never mind, never mind. That can be discussed later. For now, let's settle this housekeeper affair. You shall have a cook, of course, and a cleaning woman—perhaps an under-housemaid, a gardener. . . . I *need* you to run things, you know. And you will have your own suite . . . plenty of room. What do you say?"

"Oh, Mother," cried Laverne. "Let's do it, Mother! Let's get out of this awful rat trap!"

"Laverne, watch your language," said Mabel, absently.

"What's rat trap?" asked Laverne querulously. "Rat trap's nothing. What's rat trap?"

"Hush, girl!" commanded Mordecai. "We're waiting for your mother's decision."

Laverne tossed her head and pouted; Sammy said not a word; all three turned toward Mabel. She began to twist her hands.

"You're all waiting for me! Oh, dear!" She turned to Mordecai. "It's just that it seems such an imposition . . ."

"Nonsense, my dear. Then it's settled." He rose to his feet. "I think that calls for another drink!"

"Oh, no," said Mabel, holding out her glass. "I'll be tipsy!"

"Good for you, my dear," answered Mordecai. "We'll all get tipsy for once . . . drunk on success!" He poured the drinks, not bothering to heat up Laverne's, and handed them around.

"Ugh," said Laverne, "it's nasty. No sugar."

"I like the taste," said Sammy. "It's better this way."

"Whiskey-soda, my boy," said Mordecai. "The English drink."

Mabel set her drink down and stood up, carefully. "I'm not English, but I can drink anything . . . it makes no matter." She waved her hand vaguely. "Now where was I? . . . Oh, yes." She walked to the ironing-board and slipped off the ruffled pink dress that awaited the last of the iron. "It will do," she said. "The unironed part's at the back . . . it won't show." She hung it carefully on a wire hanger, opened the closet door and put it in, folded the ironing-board and put it in, too. The door was warped; she gave it a little kick. "Stay there," she said, and hiccuped, daintily. "I always hated to iron. . . ."

## Chapter 7

It was 1914. A huge war was even now beginning in Europe, sparked by the assassination of an obscure archduke in a small country, but in America only an enlightened few saw its import, and even fewer its outcome. Ford's empire was growing; the motor car would soon change the face of a nation. That other empire, of motion pictures, with its many rulers, would change its soul.

Sunny California was beginning to claim its own; now fifty percent of films were being shot in its hills, plains, and waters. Whole streets of downtown Los Angeles were blocked to traffic for days at a time, while cameras ground, maidens awaited rescue, outlaws shattered the peace, and funny fellows dodged hilarious dangers. New stars were emerging, their names as familiar as a next-door neighbor's; the Keystone Cops, the Little Tramp, and America's Sweetheart were household words. *The Birth of a Nation*, that artistic

landmark with its road-show prices, had not yet appeared, but *Tillie's Punctured Romance*, the first full-length comedy, had. The classics were still being done, some of them, like *Oliver Twist* or *Tale of Two Cities*, over and over again; the new serial was all the rage, eagerly awaited every week; cowboys rode, and Indians bit the dust of the Old West; melodramas and tearjerkers were very popular; but comedy was king. Since the days, centuries ago, of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, there had not been such beloved characters, such time-honored plots, such inspired buffoonery. It was in the receptive aura of this glittering and golden world that Spotless Sam, that latter-day Pierrot, was born.

Sammy was sixteen, and as tall as he would ever be—just under six feet. Curiously, though, he retained the look of a boy: narrow-chested, the arms a little too long, the head small, set a bit forward on a long and slender neck; there was a boneless look to his body. His voice was changing, with those unexpected harshnesses, the squeaks and squawks of a painful adolescence. It did not matter, though, for the screen was silent, and the screen was where he lived. He had just finished a successful series, the *Sammy* pictures; there had been twelve in all, one-reelers of a boy's adventures, the character a cross between Huckleberry Finn and the as yet nonexistent Andy Hardy. It would be the end of such parts for him; the camera, that truth-seeker, was beginning to uncover, in his boy look, the emerging man. He retained from the series, which had been made all at once and on location, a sizable bank account, a Red Indian sun-tan, and a black Labrador stunt dog, grown old in the service of Essanay Films.

The Labrador—named, inevitably, Blackie, for the series—he rechristened Othello, as a farewell gesture to the Shakespeare which, alas, he no longer practiced. His lessons with Mordecai had long since vanished; they were both far too busy. Mordecai called it "prostituting his art," but the fortune and the name he was fast acquiring seemed to agree with him; he looked ten years younger. Mordecai wore his white hair long and flowing, had his suits custom-made, all in white linen, and drove a white Stanley Steamer; he was one of the sights of the new Hollywood. He had recently bought a large block of shares in the new Monarch company, and was now a producer as well; the shares, bought at five dollars, had already reached the hundred mark and were still rising, a dizzying prospect.

Since Sammy still lived in Mordecai's house, his bank account did not dwindle unduly, though he was nearly a whole month without



work, an unheard-of circumstance in these fast-paced days. Mordecai's eyes squinted narrowly as he looked at him. "Get on over to IMP, my boy," he said, "before that sunburn fades. They're casting an Indian story."

The story centered on a half-breed boy, torn between two worlds, and Sammy was very effective in it, with his narrow, high-cheek-boned face and sad, dreaming eyes. Mordecai always said that his career might have taken a turn toward those alien romantics so successful later for Valentino, had not Fate stepped in. Sammy called it not Fate, but his Comic Muse; they were both much given to colorful prose, from long familiarity with the written captions that augmented their silent-film action. It was perhaps a little bit of both.

For the first time, Sammy was turned down for a part, the Indian husband in *Ramona*. He was far too young, and he knew it; still, it came as something of a shock; he moped, and took an extra drink in the evenings, to raise his spirits. As always with actors between jobs, he felt that he would never work again. "Take advantage of your liberty," said Mordecai heartily. "Enjoy this paradise. Walk! Swim! Take up fencing—very good for an actor, fencing. I remember—"

"I'll buy a horse," said Sammy, suddenly. For he had learned to ride, even bareback and stunt riding, for the Indian picture, and horses were cheap; every studio had dozens of them, used once or twice and eating their heads off in costly stables; he was able to buy the palomino he had learned on, called Speedy in derision. It was a good-natured, lazy beast, attractively marked but running to fat.

"He only needs exercise," said Sammy, and forbade Laverne to feed him sugar lumps. Laverne looked at him blankly; she had no intention of doing so; she was afraid of animals. Besides, she had lived in a heady dream of late, ever since she had been selected to be one of the Keystone Bathing Beauties, with a two-year contract at forty-five dollars a week, and the childish curls and pinafores a thing of the past.

Sammy rode every morning, breathing deep of the early air, refreshingly free of greasepaint for once. He rode through the hills that rose, tangled with wild growth, behind the house; he rode along the empty golden stretch of beach, kicking at Speedy's sides in the vain hope of a gallop; he rode mostly in the streets of the city, while schoolboys darted across his path at the call of a bell and wagons trundled wobbily in the trolley tracks. There were few motor cars in downtown Los Angeles as yet, though the number was steadily growing; you could always tell when one had passed ahead, for the smell

of gas from the exhaust was overwhelming. Manure, of course, lay everywhere, its smell homely, unnoticeable, the smell of city life; fresh droppings dotted the street's center, and neat piles ranged along the curbs, waiting for the street-cleaners' shovels. The street-cleaners, too, were like property men in Chinese dramas, taken for granted; one simply never noticed them; even their white uniforms, of an unlikely cleanliness, seemed no more than ghostly gaps in the bluish-white atmosphere. One day, however, Sammy did notice one, quite by accident.

He had guided Speedy to the side of Wilshire Boulevard, near the entrance to a famous hotel, where a horse trough stood; the horse was gratefully nosing in it, snuffling noisily, shaking his head, tossing bright drops of water into the morning air, while Sammy stood, idly watching the street scene. A graceful brougham, open, was pulled up to the curb in front of the hotel, its driver in old-fashioned livery, badge of one of the more elegant stables. A young girl, pretty as a rose, came out of the door, dressed in a light-green morning costume, slightly hobbled in the newest style; she carried a small nosegay, hot-house violets, oversized, set in a lacy paper frill. As she stepped into the carriage, handed up by a deferential doorman, Sammy noticed a movement, quite near him, on the pavement; a street-cleaner leaned on his broom, staring; the girl's glance swept over them both, unseeing. The street-cleaner, mesmerized, pulled off his white cap; his eyes, young as April, were starry. Sammy watched, fascinated.

The girl seated herself, and bent her head to her violets, inhaling. A little frown, charming, marked the smooth whiteness of her brow; delicately she detached one of the flowers; it drooped, limp in her gloved fingers. Her lovely lip curled slightly; she tossed it over the side, straightened her back, murmured a few words to the driver, and was driven away. The street-cleaner watched, a long moment, till the carriage turned the corner. Then he clapped his cap onto his head again, grasped his broom firmly, and prepared to work.

A little pile of dung, fresh and yellow, steaming, lay, neat as an anthill, where the carriage had waited; the violet, big as a silver dollar and streaked faintly with a blush of lavender, jeweled the gray curb. The street-cleaner's brush, poised over the manure, stopped in mid-air. A stray gust of wind, wanton, caught the violet, blowing it off the curb toward the horse-dropping. The street-cleaner swooped—just in time! He held the fragile, wilting bloom aloft for a moment, beaming, then tucked it carefully into his breast pocket. Then, whistling, he set his shoulders jauntily, pushed his cap to a rakish angle,

and went to work, leaving the street as smooth as an unwritten sheet of paper.

Sammy turned his mount around and headed home, plotting all the way. By the time he reached the house, a whole scenario was bursting in his head. He practiced the whole day, miming in front of the mirror, trying out makeup. He borrowed one of Mordecai's oldest white suits; it hung limply, too wide in the shoulders, too baggy in the pants; it was just the effect he wanted. For the cap, his old checked one would have to do, and a push-broom, not quite the right size, borrowed from the gardener. The house was quiet all afternoon, for, except for him, they were all working; Mabel had been promoted from housekeeper to casting director, and already presided over an office in the city. So it was not till after dinner that Sammy, looking like a cat full of cream, presented his inspired comedy sketch to his assembled "family."

He had fleshed out the story, miming all the parts—starting with the street-cleaner at his accustomed duties, with many hilarious comedy touches, such as a wind blowing back his gathered dust, a fountain spraying him, the exhaust from an auto making him nauseous, and so forth. At each laugh, he improvised further. The girl is escorted into the hotel in the evening by a villain with mustachios and a leer, who presents the fresh bouquet to her. The street-cleaner, thoroughly smitten, takes up his vigil, watching at the entrance all through the night. He sees the villain sneak away at daybreak, his leer triumphant, and, later, the girl emerges, distraught, looking to right and left. She signals a cab, climbs in, points the way she thinks her lover has gone. As they drive away, she discovers the flowers are wilted, quite dead, and with an expression of infinite *doleur*, she drops them to the ground. The street-cleaner retrieves them, lovingly smooths them out, and, with tears coursing down his white cheeks, buttons them up close to his heart.

"Will it do?" asked Sammy, panting happily.

"Will it do!" cried Mordecai. "It's brilliant, my boy . . . brilliant!"

"I laughed harder than I do at Charles Chaplin!" said Laverne, shaking her head in wonder.

Mabel wiped away a tear. "But it's so sad."

"That's why it's brilliant," said Mordecai. "At least for the first one . . . This can be a series, you know. *The White Knight*, it might be called."

"Or just *White Sam*," suggested Laverne.

"Sammy Snow?" said Sammy.

"Yes. . . . Snowy Sam . . . or Spotless Sam. . . . That's it—Spotless Sam! Has a catchy sound."

"Do you think we could sell it to Mack?" ventured Sammy. He meant Mack Sennett, whose new comedies were raking in thousands of dollars every day.

"Not on your life!" cried Mordecai. "Too good for him! We'll produce it ourselves at Monarch. I've got a new young cameraman over there . . . just about ready to direct. Bright fellow. Let's try him on this. Get it down on paper, my boy."

"On paper!" Sammy was dismayed. "I can't write!"

"Just a working script, Sam . . . just something to go on. I'll help you!"

"Do you think you can really get Monarch to do it?"

"I ought to! I own eighty percent of the shares now." Mordecai drew himself up, his eye kindling with the old dramatic fire. "*I am* Monarch!"

## Chapter 8

The new Spotless Sam series was launched in just under a month; the first episode, derived from Sammy's original sketch and expanded to two reels, was sneaked onto the market at a deceptively low starting lease, and made a big profit for its distributors. Shown at first as a bonus, it soon went into feature spots all over the country; indeed, it is still shown occasionally at film museums as a classic of mime, along with some of the early Chaplins and Keatons.

The young cameraman, elevated to director, did indeed prove to be uncommonly clever. He was a lank-haired, loose-limbed fellow with a lantern jaw and the eyes of a visionary, named Buzz Browning. No one seemed to know his Christian name; Buzz came from his habit of humming at his work. His origins, too, were mysterious; after he became famous, wild rumors circulated, but Buzz only shrugged and smiled. He had many talents; he could whip up a scenario in half an hour, dress a set perfectly, spot a sight gag unerringly, and sweet-talk the most fractious temperament. His taste was impeccable in all directions—in manners, morals, comedy sense,



dress, and makeup. His comedies escaped the vulgar by a hair's breadth, but beautifully; his chase scenes were perilous, spectacular, and excruciatingly funny. He it was who was responsible for Sammy's image; he who insisted on a dead-white, near-clown makeup, with downturned, tragic eyes, and hair plastered in wisps across the forehead, ears, and nape, a look of androgynous madness, oddly appealing. He it was also who created a new heroine, and, with it, a new Laverne.

At Sammy's insistence, they had got Laverne on loan from Keystone, at considerable expense; she was to play the young girl of the first episode. Buzz gave her a long look that swept from head to foot, shook his head sadly, and began to hum, walking around her, putting out a hand to tilt her chin, studying her profile. She was dressed in the latest mode, or as nearly as she could approximate it, for Los Angeles was still a backwater as far as fashion was concerned. Her frock, even so, passed muster, for Mabel had copied it from a New York magazine. "The lines are good," Buzz said, "nice, narrow waist . . ." But he began to hum louder. "The color is wrong, though—and the square neck is ugly . . . and that hair!" Mabel bridled, for Laverne's hair was her greatest beauty, everyone said so. Thick and honey-colored, crimped with irons and standing out like a halo, it was exactly what every ingenue in pictures attempted to achieve. "Trust me," said Buzz. "Come on, girl . . . Miss Kelly, is it?" And he led her off to the tiny dressing-room, to work a small miracle.

He led her back. Her gown was makeshift, whipped together with pins and basting stitches—yards of foaming white theatrical gauze, sashed in wide black velvet, the shoulders draped in a sort of low fichu that hinted discreetly at nudity. The crimps were gone from her hair, and it wrapped her small head in gleaming bands, a helmet of gold. Her lips were a soft pink, and her strange, light eyes were subtly shadowed and lengthened; he had shaded her cheeks, too, under the cheekbones, and highlighted her nose and chin; it was a makeup secret that would take other actresses twenty years to discover.

"She looks like a lady!" said Mordecai, wonderingly.

"She has good bones," said Buzz, squinting professionally.

Laverne, in a minor way, was almost as much of a success in the Spotless Sam pictures as Sammy himself; under Buzz's direction she became the perfect foil to his pathetic clown; she was coolly beautiful, an untouchable goddess, sweet, serene, and almost stern. The posters announced, week after week, in theaters across the country,

"A brand-new Buzz Browning comedy, starring Spotless Sam, with Lady Laverne."

Laverne liked the letters she got from admirers—they came from all over, places like New Jersey and Minneapolis, even!—and she enjoyed winning the *Photoplay* contest for the best-dressed girl in pictures. Still, she missed being a Bathing Beauty (for, of course, they had had to buy out her contract). This was harder, not so free and easy, and Buzz was after her all the time, making her take speech lessons and study etiquette. What could it matter, when the screen was silent, and she never went anywhere that needed good manners anyhow? She sighed to herself more than once; "I'm still young," she said, thinking of the lost beach boys in their striped suits with the hair curling on their chests where the tops scooped low. They had all crowded round her then, not so long ago, liking her more than that dark, stuck-up Gloria Swanson who got all the close-ups. Well, at least she, Laverne, was getting her own close-ups now. But life had been something lively and breathless there on the beaches; anything could happen. She didn't know what exactly, it was only a feeling. And she *did* miss the boys. And all the photographers, young, too, and with something in their eyes—a challenge, maybe, a dare. Now there was only Buzz, buzzing around the camera, fussing at her dress, frowning at every little thing . . . and Sammy, still a kid and familiar as an old porridge dish, except for that crazy white face and those spiky bangs.

Sammy really did not notice the metamorphosis of Laverne, though everyone else remarked on it; he had always thought her beautiful, delicate, and good, as far as he thought about girls at all. Sammy, rising sixteen, was curiously innocent, and quite remarkably incurious. Perhaps it had something to do with his having no friends at all of his own age; perhaps he simply matured late. He was like an acolyte; his Art (always capitalized) was his church. He did not share Mordecai's contempt for the screen medium, discerning in it what so many of his contemporaries did not, its infinite capacity to accept peaks of perfection. To that end he worked from dawn till dusk; he studied boxing, fencing, acrobatics; if a muscle proved sluggish, he flexed it till it was like a well-oiled piece of machinery. Even the little joints of his fingers were as supple as eels; only the wrist bone, broken long ago in the earthquake, remained stiff; he studied how to disguise its shortcomings. He practiced falls, stood on his head for hours, ran miles. He scorned stunt men and performed all of his perilous screen antics himself; in the first two years of the Spotless Sam pictures, there was no part of his body that had not been sprained or

dislocated; he emerged from this testing with limbs like rubber and a torso like a steel spring. Like all great mimes, he had a face as still as marble when he worked; is it a racial memory of the ancient days of masks? Though he did not know it, he was really rather beautiful. An aging bit actor, a retired homosexual, was heard to remark that young Sam Savage had a head like a faun by Praxiteles, and Laverne said once, suddenly, "You know, you look like Nijinsky!" Sammy went bright red, for the young dancer was the nearest thing to a sex symbol yet produced and had appeared nearly nude in several ballets. As for Laverne, she had surprised herself; her flesh tingled pleasantly, and she hummed a little, under her breath, like Buzz.

The Sammy pictures were filmed mostly in the streets, for obvious reasons, but now and then Buzz, the ingenious, dreamed up, for variety, another situation. They almost never used sets, but trooped off in a body, actors, cameraman, wardrobe, and all the rest, to make the picture on location, as it was called. In one scenario the little street-cleaner was hired by a millionaire yachtsman, and the entire film was shot on board a forty-foot cruiser, with the crew and captain as extras. Sammy was seasick, but Laverne loved it; the sailors brought spice to her day, and danger to her night; they were not so good-looking as the beach boys of her Keystone days, but no matter; here she had them all to herself. Years later, at the height of her fame, the skipper of the fishing trawl *Lady Laverne* entertained his charter guests with anecdotes of his adventures with the boat's namesake, insisting, with a leer, that she was "no lady." They did not believe him; it was a more gallant age, and, besides, they were snobs.

To do Laverne justice, she had done no more than dally with the sailors or the beach boys; truly, there had been no opportunity. She had had one lover only in the two years of the little comedies: Buzz. It was a close-kept secret; Mabel did not know, or Sammy. Mordecai, whom nothing escaped, said, over a third whiskey, "Why don't you make an honest woman of the girl?"

They were in a little bar, smelly and dark, in the Mexican quarter, just off Olvera Street; they were strangers to the neighborhood, or nearly; it was a place to get away to now and then. Still, Buzz gave a start and began to look over his shoulder, guiltily. He grinned at himself, rubbed his chin, and said, slowly, looking at Mordecai quizzically, "Hell, Mordecai, she's just a little round-heels. Might as well marry one of those." And he gestured a little with his glass to the end of the smeary bar, where two skinny dark girls watched them

with greedy, contemptuous eyes. "Besides," he went on, sighing a little, "I got a wife, back East."

"Why did you do it?" asked Mordecai. "The poor thing's hardly more than a child."

"What would you do if that kind of child came creeping into your tent in the Mojave Desert?"

Mordecai gave a low, rich chuckle. "Same thing you did, I guess . . . even at my age. It happened on location, did it? Sounds like the name of a song. . . ."

Buzz grinned again, a little wryly. "Jesus, Mordecai—she came right into my cot . . . right down under the covers!" He shook his head sadly. "It gets cold in the desert. . . ."

Mordecai clucked sympathetically. "Still . . . she was lucky, at that. Might have been anyone."

"Flattery will get you nowhere, milord, as they say in English novels . . . but you're right, anyway. A born tart, Laverne."

"A good armful, I expect," said Mordecai, rolling the words on his tongue. "Those skinny, pale ones . . ."

Buzz let it go; cad though he might be, he refused to kiss and tell. He mused a moment. "It's got to be over soon. I can't risk Mabel's finding out . . . she'd tear me to pieces." He shook his head once more, smiling. "It was rather nice . . . making a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

"My God, yes!" cried Mordecai softly. "What a job you've done there! I'd never have believed it!"

"She's got a Mayfair accent—almost. Did you notice? Speaks a little French, too. And she *is* the best-dressed girl in pictures . . . though that's not saying much. She can't spell, of course."

"Well, she'll not be hiring out for a secretary," said Mordecai slyly. And they laughed together softly in the beery gloom, like two friendly vultures.

## Chapter 9

Sammy stood at the rail of the big Atlantic liner, willing himself not to be seasick. The gangplank had been lifted already, creaking might-



ily; the crowd on the dock waved and shouted wildly, seeming far away, like lions roaring at the zoo. The shouts were not for him; the mayor had vanished already, back to his office, his committees, and his worries; the key to the city, fake, oversized, made of some bright base metal, weighed heavily in Sammy's uniform pocket. It was a troopship; Sammy, albeit as an entertainer, was going to war. It was 1917.

It had all happened so quickly: the conscription office, the Red Cross, the giant posters, hurriedly posed for and quickly thrown together: "Spotless Sam to the rescue!" and "Sammy and the big clean-up," "Uncle Sam and Sammy . . . why not you?" They had stared out at him across the country, every big train stop was plastered with them. The last one, with Laverne as gallant little Belgium, waiting to be rescued; the loss of Laverne, a dull ache still. Tears pricked behind his eyes; he blinked; self-pity washed over him, mixed with bewilderment. A face swam, clear, out of the fog that was his mind; the huge dark eyes deep with the sadness of centuries, the high white forehead, the black hair shining with oil, the skin, old ivory, Mediterranean, bluish at the chin; an alien face, Mendelssohn Wax, Mendy. "I'm going to marry Mendy," she had said. He gripped the rail, clammily; did the boat sweat, or did he?

Sammy had always thought that *he* would marry Laverne, that they had somehow been marked for it—though, after they had slept together, it had felt like incest, it had felt *wrong*. Perhaps she felt it, too, and that was why? He had never known what Laverne was feeling, though surely, of all people, it was he who knew her best. "You're two years younger than me," she had said, and laughed. Humiliation even now, months after, washed over him, hugely, like the ocean waves he so dreaded. Had she known it was his first time? And how stupid he had been not to have guessed, in all these months, about Buzz, and Mendy, too . . . and how many others? He winced; he did not censure her; the contempt he felt was only for himself.

With them, too, it had happened on location, though not in the desert; they had been shooting in an abandoned lumberjack camp in the mountains, among the vast, primeval redwoods. Sammy had now only a vague recollection of the film story; there had been so many pictures, so swiftly conceived, so hurriedly shot; how had they contrived to put the little street-cleaner in such a locale? Not that it mattered; audiences would accept him at the bottom of the sea, in a diving-suit, by now. He shuddered; the front line seemed infinitely preferable.

Buzz, with a bad throat, hoarse and feverish, had gone early to his cabin, tired out after a long day's shooting. Like children let out of school, all the rest of them, cast, camera crew, script people, had sat up late around a huge common-room fire, drinking Mexican tequila, going through three bottles of it. Even Laverne, who seldom drank anything, had joined in, pouring salt from the Woolworth salt cellar onto her hand and licking it off, drinking a quick swig after. "It doesn't taste so bad this way," she said, laughing.

Sammy never felt his liquor as most people did, though his cheeks burned, hot, right up into his eyeballs; Laverne stumbled, though, on the stairs, and he had to steady her all the way up to her room. "It's right next door to yours!" she cried softly, as though surprised. "Too-dle-oo, Sammy!" she trilled, in a sweet, silly voice, unlike her own, and shut the door.

He lay in bed, in his thick flannel nightshirt, issued by the wardrobe lady against the mountain cold, feeling the icy mattress warm up slowly with the heat of his body, a pleasant sensation. A pulse beat in his throat, loud, rocking the bed; he opened his eyes. The window, curtainless, was a white square; the moon was full, they had seen it earlier like a Christmas ball hanging in the dark trees. He could see everything in the room, the plain deal dresser with the lace cloth on top, the straight chair with a crooked leg, his clothes on pegs by the door. The brass of the doorknob caught the moonlight as it turned; she came in like a ghost, frivolous in white and silver, her hair unbound, and giggling.

"Look what I've got," she whispered breathily, leaning over him. She smelled of whiskey and toothpaste and, under, her own scent, sweet and sharp, familiar. Something shone in her hand: the glass of the cheap salt cellar. She giggled again, and pulled off the coverlet. "Oh—take off that thing," she said, pulling at the nightshirt. "I want to lick the salt off you," she said softly, close to him.

He lay as if paralyzed, the pulse beating loudly in his ears. She did not hear it; she was searching for the buttons. She whimpered a little, not finding them, and pulled the shirt up, bunching it around his throat and bending over him. He felt the tickling fall of the salt grains, and then her tongue, small and warm, on his bare shoulder. She sprinkled the salt again, lower, near his groin; the tongue streaked down his body like a line of thin fire, not wet at all, sending the hot blood to flood him hugely. She was on top of him then and moving purposefully; her nightrobe parted on flesh white and gleaming as the scales of a fish. She was breathing hard, even moaning; her

fingers dug into his arms. "Not yet, Sammy," she whispered. "Not yet . . ." But it was too late; his soul rushed out of him in a great bursting of bonds. He heard a voice, high and wailing, his own, and felt her hand across his mouth. "Sh-h-h," she said, giggling. The dropped salt cellar rolled against his thigh, an alien thing, like ice against his burning skin. She rolled over and lay beside him, her breath coming in long, shuddering sighs.

"I'm sorry," he said afterward. "I'm sorry," humbly.

"It's all right," she said. "I don't mind." And then, musingly, "You're two years younger than me. . . ."

He could not bear to think of it, even now. Though, afterward, other times, it *had* been all right. For months it had been all right, and more; snatched moments, in cars, at the beach (the sand gritty in their underwear afterward), in a graveyard among the stones, behind their own locked bedroom doors, in turn, listening, terrified, for Mabel's step on the stair. Golden days, in the seasonless golden weather, and he writing love poems jealously; reading them to her softly in the dark, by the light of one candle, flickering, and she, face still as marble, listening, her fingers plucking at the coverlet, restlessly, reaching up, when he had finished, to pull him down to her.

The war had, in a way, changed things, even before America had entered it. Feeling had been running high against the Germans, against the bully Kaiser; people with German-sounding names had changed them, if they could, fearing the loss of business. Not Mendy, though, not Mendelssohn Wax, one had to give him that. Perhaps, though, it was not courage, but simply that he refused to part with his name; he had wanted to be a musician, and still, in snatched moments, played the huge concert grand in his great new house high in the hills; driving by, below, on the new-built highway, one heard, like fairy song, the strange, sweet, faraway, questing chords.

Mendelssohn Wax was some of the "new money" of Mordecai's predictions; an elegant, slender Jew from New York, second-generation garment-district czar. Sadly, ten years earlier, at twenty-two, he had come back from Vienna, upon the death of his father, to put his thin, Savile Row shoulder to the family wheel; now he had left a thriving kingdom to found another empire in the West; Mendelssohn Wax Productions, with only two feature pictures released as yet, was already a name to cast spells. For his third picture, a war-time tale, he had bought Laverne's contract for a whole year. Always the gentleman, he had waived compensation when the picture was

finished in three months, leaving Laverne free for the Sammy comedies once more.

But Laverne had got a taste of the higher life; she was no longer content to be the little street-cleaner's lady, she wanted to Act. Never mind that she could not, as Mordecai said; the bug had bitten her. Mendelssohn, thoroughly smitten, was mounting a handsome, inordinately expensive production of *Vanity Fair* for her. "It will never go," said Mordecai, gloomily envious.

Sammy, selfish as all lovers, gave no thought to Laverne's career; it was the girl he wanted, and now had lost. "I'm going to marry Mendy" rang in all his silences.

"But, Laverne, honey," he had ventured, anxiously, "we might be going to have a baby." For he had seen her sometimes, evenings now and then when the shooting had gone well, and she had broken early. She had stared at him, her strange, disquieting stare, and said, "It might be Mendy's, too." Into the shocked silence (how stupid, how callow he had been!) she had gone on, with a touch of playful malice, "How if it had a long Jewish nose? How would you like that?"

"But," Sammy, so confused, said foolishly, "but Mendy doesn't have a long Jewish nose."

Laverne smiled, shrugging a little. "It doesn't matter . . . I'll marry him. He wants me to."

"Laverne," said Sammy, a little diffident, "is it because—because we were so poor always . . . and— Well, I make a lot of money now. It won't be like that—wouldn't be, if . . ." His voice trailed off.

She stared again for a moment. "Do you mean am I marrying him for his money?"

Sammy did not know where to look. "Well . . . I thought—"

"No," she said. "I'd marry Mendy if he was poor as a—a—an immigrant. Mendy's a *man*!"

He had got drunk then, that night, like a fool, and offered to fight Buzz, who was drunk, too, and so said the wrong thing. "Forget her, Sammy," he said, enunciating carefully. "She's not worth losing sleep over."

"Come outside," said Sammy, getting up from the bar stool.

"She's not worth it, Sam, I tell you . . . she's just a little tart. She'll lie down for anybody . . . even me. . . ."

Sammy swung and missed; Buzz hit him a little and he fell, cracking his head on the bar rail as he went. It was not a concussion, barely a bad bump, but the newspapers got hold of it somehow;



Buzz said they had spies in all the bars in Los Angeles. "Jesus, Sam, I'm sorry! I didn't even mean to hit you."

"That's all right . . . we're in the same boat, I guess." For he had heard Buzz's words, and they had sunk in later.

"Hell, Sam . . . she's no Lorelei, either!" Buzz was a little angry at the assumption that he shared Sammy's juvenile passion. She may have been no Lorelei, but national news hawks would have it so; the slugging match and the civil wedding which followed soon after made headlines across the country; it would be good publicity for the new movie; perhaps *Vanity Fair* would go, after all.

The whole hullabaloo had died down now, finally, though Sammy's broken heart still made the feature pages of *Photoplay*. He thought bitterly of the waste; no picture for him, only war. But thank God he did not have to attend the wedding! "Uncle Sam will not wait," he had said, wryly, when Laverne asked him to be best man. Buzz had done it instead, having no excuse. Fox Movietone News had carried it, for once pushing aside the war, the fleeing Belgians, and the U-boat peril. The Mayor of Los Angeles had officiated, and Mordecai, in striped morning trousers, had given the bride away. Buzz smiled sheepishly at the camera, looking infinitely scruffy in his tails; Mabel was weeping, and the groom had lost his extraordinary poise and looked as though he had made off with the silver. His side was not represented; perhaps, like Catholics, they did not recognize such a marriage. Or perhaps, with the death of his father, Mendy, too, was now an orphan, like Sammy. Sammy felt the treacherous tears again. "Too much champagne," he thought, sick of himself suddenly. "I need a real drink," he told himself, and wiped his damp palms on his uniform pants.

The roaring of the lion crowd swelled suddenly; voices could be heard in it; the big boat was moving, slowly, sluggishly. Cheers rose from the deck below, where the real doughboys were massed. It had been a luxury liner with three classes, hurriedly converted. This deck where Sammy stood had been the first; it still gleamed with the brass fittings and polished wood of its pre-war clientele; long deck chairs lined the broad deck, their cushions tied down under rubber sheets beside them. A few paces away, a little knot of men, uniformed, too, watched at the rail; Sammy had met them, his traveling companions: some Red Cross officials, a couple of doctors, a singer from the opera; one turned, feeling his eyes, Edwards, the young chaplain. Sammy nodded and smiled, touching his cap. Who else would be here, along with them? Not many, surely. Officers, perhaps the cap-

tain of the ship; he did not know. The privileged few, rattling around up here. Well, there was a bar-salon anyway; he had made sure of that right away. The gap was widening; water, oily and dark, lapped heavily at the side of the ship, far below; his stomach churned delicately. He swallowed; his mouth was dry. Surely he could get a drink now; the people on the dock were ants already and getting smaller; they were at sea, or would be soon. Buzz had warned him there was a certain barrier to be crossed, something to do with taxes and laws, national and international, before they could serve anything. Well, he could but try; he turned away, seeking the right doorway. Ah, there it was, traffic already coming in and out; he smiled to himself. "It was ever thus," he thought, mimicking Mordecai's rich language. He hunched his shoulders against the chill of the gray New York noon, and headed for the salon doorway.

Laverne had dispelled his innocence; he *smelled* the girls before he neared them, a little group that twittered, birdlike, at the rail; not perfume, really; perhaps just another sense, awakened now. He turned to look at them, curious; wide hats tilted above soft hair, flowers at shoulders, little, tight waists, twinkling ankles, a fluttering flag in a gloved hand; a pretty blur of faces. And one, as if lit by a rocket, suddenly blazing; long eyes in a long, beautiful mask, the eyes on a slant upward, the perfect mouth slanting down above a small, round chin. It held him, the face, he could not take his eyes away; he tripped over the high sill that was on all ships' doorways, righting himself and cursing softly. He looked back at the face and smiled; the eyes lengthened impossibly, the cheeks rounding; he saw a white gleam of teeth before she turned away. He went through the doorway, missing the face already, feeling alone.

## Chapter 10

He had not wasted any time; she sat across from him, second night out, at a tiny gilt table, an occupied island in the sea of little gilt islands that made up the huge baroque café-bar, half empty now. Though perhaps *she* had done it really, he thought with a start.

"Can we get out of here, do you think?" she had asked, low, at his

side, close-pressed in the crowd around the tinny piano. He had steered her lightly, touching her elbow, through the smoke-filled servicemen's bar, out into the sharp, salty air, onto the slippery deck. On the stairs she had murmured, shuddering a little, "All those shiny eyes—looking at me . . . But maybe it was you they were watching—you're the entertainer!" There was a small mocking sound in her voice, under the slight huskiness of her whisper.

And later, over their drinks, seated now, the same small mockery as she answered his question.

"My God," he said, alarmed. "An ambulance driver . . . isn't that dangerous?"

"I have a charmed life," she said, looking at him long-eyed over the rim of her glass. "I expect they won't let me do it, really . . . not for a while. They're sending us to Paris. We'll be driving generals around, I guess . . . waiting outside embassies and things . . ." She waved her hand vaguely, charmingly. Everything she did was charming, he thought, watching her. Or not charming, important; memorable, somehow. Close to, the strong mask of her face had subtleties: a lopsided dimple beside the corner of her mouth, a thin flare at the nostrils, blue shadows at the inner corners of her eyes and a trace of blue beneath—could she have put it there? No, not makeup, no one would put makeup there. His look moved upward, to her hair; like garnets, no—carnelians, was it? Dark red it was, some leaves had that color when they turned in autumn, but her eyes were dark, almost black-dark.

". . . they don't even know if I can drive," she said, laughing. "They don't test you or anything . . . the Red Cross. I guess they don't have too many volunteers."

"Can you?" he asked. "Drive, I mean?"

"Oh, yes! I love cars! I can drive anything . . . change tires and all that, too. I could be a mechanic," she said, smiling wide. "Some of the other girls can't, though . . . never have."

"But that's shocking! That's terrible! Why, they could kill people!"

She looked at him; an odd look, tilting her head. "It would be a drop in the bucket, wouldn't it? They're dying like flies over there . . . if you read between the lines, that is."

"Yes," he said, soberly. "Yes . . . it's a ghastly business, war."

"Oh, my . . . that doesn't sound like Uncle Sam's favorite nephew!"

"Well . . . publicity," he wavered, feeling very small, suddenly.

"Never mind," she said, putting out her hand. "I understand. I'm an actress, too. On the stage," she added, raising her chin.

"Oh," he breathed, inanely. "Oh—that's wonderful."

She lit another cigarette, not waiting for him to produce his lighter. Smoked like a chimney, this girl, he thought, irrelevantly. She inhaled deeply, blew out the smoke, and watched it float, a dimness that clouded the hurricane-shaded lamp.

"As a matter of fact, we're some kind of cousins," she said, suddenly.

"I'm afraid I didn't catch your name," he said, warily.

"You didn't hear it," she said. "Hardly anybody has . . . yet."

She stubbed out her cigarette, looked at him, rather defiantly, he thought, wondering. "It's the same as yours . . . but French," she said. "Solange Sauvage . . . like it?"

"Sauvage . . . There's a French branch?"

She shook her head. "I made it up. I'm really Sally Savage, down in Cape Girardeau."

"Cape Girardeau?" he asked, stupidly, as if it mattered, with all the rest of it. "Where's that?"

"Missouri," she said. "Captain Billy's Showboat . . . part of the showboat Savages. Used to go up and down the rivers, but not in my time. Now it just sits there . . . in the river. I was born on it," she said. "Never lived anywhere else. And here I am again," she finished, laughing. "On a boat again!"

He had hardly heard the end of her sentence. He stared at her in dismay. "Are we really cousins?"

"Not so the Pope would mind," she said, laughing. At his blank look she amended it. "We might be—oh, twenty-fourth cousins, eight times removed . . . who could count back? But we are part of the same family, way back somewhere. The Old Lady—Grandma—knows a lot of history. The Savage history, that is. I've heard it all my life. Back to Agincourt, and King Henry the Fifth knighting Sir Hercules on the field . . ."

"Yes," said Sammy. "Yes . . . I know about that, too! It must be the same family. Though—" and he shook his head sadly—"I really haven't heard much. Ethel . . . my mother . . . used to tell me some of it. But I was so young then, only eight."

She said nothing, asked nothing, only sat looking at him quietly without expression. She was so beautiful, sitting there; his heart grew full and swelling. Suddenly he spoke.

"They were killed in the earthquake in San Francisco—my mother



and father." He had never spoken of it before. "The whole house fell in, while we were sleeping. Except right where my bed was. One minute it was there, and the next minute gone."

Her hand covered his, warm and dry; she did not speak.

"I don't remember it much, though," he said. "I fainted. I don't remember much about the earthquake." But, now that he had said it, he found that he did; it poured out of him, like floodgates opening. He told her everything: Mordecai, Mabel, their life together, Laverne—not all about Laverne, of course, but the child Laverne. He told her about the dreary schooldays and the exciting early days of motion pictures, warming to his subject, acting things out a little, finishing up breathless, looking at his glass. "I haven't even finished my drink!" he cried in wonder.

"Do you drink too much?" she asked, surprising him.

"No, I don't think so. Why?"

"I thought you seemed . . . Well, Daddy does—and I always wonder about other people. You had a few . . . earlier. And your cheeks are getting red, like his. I don't mind, you understand. I just wondered," she finished, delicately.

"Well," he said, a trifle crossly, setting down the empty glass, "on that note, I'm going to have another."

"Yes, I will too." She smiled. "Will you get it? I don't think there are any waiters . . . it's so late."

He set the fresh whiskeys down hard, slopping over the liquid. She was powdering her nose with a bit of cotton fluff, looking into a little mirror; he had never seen a girl do that before, in a public place. She took a long pull at her glass and set it down.

"Speaking of drinking," he said, for he could not let it alone, but must worry it, like a dog with a bone, "I notice you do pretty well yourself."

She laughed. "Oh, it doesn't affect me. Daddy, though—he's half Indian. They say Indians have no resistance to alcohol."

She had startled him again. "Half Indian . . . really?"

"Half Comanche. Grandpa . . . he's dead now . . . he was a full-blooded brave, name of John Hawksblood." She laughed delightedly. "I never thought of it before—what a combination! Hawksblood and Savage, that's me!"

He laughed, too. "I still don't quite believe you."

"Honest to God," she said. "Look at my eyes. . . ."

He wondered if he was imagining it, but there was a fold of skin at the outer corner, and then that dense sort of blackness, and the high

cheekbones, the length beneath. There *was* something . . . the reservation Indians, though, had flatter features.

"You can come back home with me and look at Daddy," she said. "He's all Indian, to look at. Dark as dark. Thank God I got Mother's red hair. She was a schoolteacher, from St. Louis."

"Wait a minute," he said. "Where did the Indian come in? I mean, if your folks were all actors . . ."

"Well, to hear Grandma tell it, she was captured by the Indians, and lived with them for years, and spoke nothing but Comanche . . . she can tell a few hair-raisers! But Daddy says John Hawksblood was a medicine-show Indian and that's how they met. This company she was with got stranded and she joined up with the medicine show, somewhere in Kansas or the Dakotas. I think that's much more likely. . . . I remember Grandpa John. I was little then, but he spoke perfect English, and I never heard him speak anything else, even on the stage when he played an Indian. They used to do a play about Pocahontas, and he was her father, and he just said whatever gibberish he could think of. . . . He was a good Othello, you know—I remember that best."

"You played Shakespeare on the showboat?" Sammy was enthralled.

"Hardly ever," she said, ruefully. "The audiences don't like it. It's always stuff nobody ever heard of, like *The Postmaster's Daughter* or *Down on the Farm* . . . or, for God's sake, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*! That's what the Old Lady ran away from in the first place! She was showboat, you see, from way back . . . Emmaline Savage."

"But I know about her!" he cried, excited. "Ethel knew about her! She was the family mystery woman. No one knew what had happened to her. She joined a company and went out West and—just vanished!"

"Well, now you know," she said, laughing. "All kidding aside, though—we could figure it out if we tried. Emmaline, my grandmother, was descended from Libby Savage, who was the daughter of Timothy Savage, who was the son of Miranda . . . and that's a famous name in the theater!"

"I'm descended from her, too . . . but I don't quite know how," said Sammy, fascinated.

"Well, look at your name," she said, reasonably. "Libby—did you know it was really Liberty?—anyway, Libby was a twin. And the other twin was named Samuel, and he was pretty well known, I guess."

"Oh, yes, Mordecai even saw him act, years and years ago."

"It must have been, for God's sake. Samuel was named for Samuel Adams—Revolutionary days. . . . Who's Mordecai?" she asked suddenly.

"You remember," said Sammy patiently. "The earthquake—I just told you. And now he practically owns Monarch Pictures."

"But he's no kin?"

"Oh, no! But he was a great Shakespearean actor."

"How old is he now?" she asked, narrowing her eyes.

"Oh, like a thousand," he said, airily. "I don't know . . . he looks younger than he did when I was a kid. But he must be seventy or so."

"I guess he *could* have seen old Samuel." She frowned and counted in her head. "I guess it's just possible . . . if he, Mordecai, was really a little boy, and if Samuel was a very old man . . ." She smiled and shrugged.

"Oh, Mordecai wouldn't lie."

"Grandma Emmaline would," she said. "I'm not even sure I'm really a Savage . . . she lies about everything. To hear her talk, she was the most beautiful thing that ever walked on the boards, and if Grandpa hadn't ruined her life she would have been famous. . . . Poor old Indian—it was the other way around! What a hell she made for him—and Daddy, too! I think that's why he drinks." She smiled bitterly. "The Old Lady . . . that's what the Nigras call her—the Negroes, I mean, it's terrible to call them that, like the country people do. The crew of the showboat—they're all Negroes. She makes their life hell—but they like her. They think she looks like one of their fat old idols. Really she looks like a toad."

"My God—that's a terrible thing to say about your grandmother!" Sammy was dreadfully shocked.

"Oh, I like her, too. I'm just being realistic." She blew a smoke ring.

"You smoke too much," he said, annoyed with her.

"It's none of your business," she said, coolly.

"It was none of your business to tell me I drank too much, either."

"I didn't. I just asked if you did. Because I was interested."

"Well . . . I'm interested about something, too!" Sammy felt his face getting red. "I'm interested to know if you always paint your face in public!"

"I don't paint my face at all," she said, coldly.

"You were. When I came back with the drinks . . . when I came back from the bar, you were looking into a mirror."

"And that's a crime?" She looked at him for a moment, smiling, then put out her hand. "Get me a drink, Samson . . . that's what I'll call you, Samson." She made a little face. "Sammy—for God's sake! Sounds like a comic song!"

He rose; he wouldn't mind another drink. She'd made him mad; madder than any girl he'd ever known. Not that he'd known many. After Laverne there'd been a few, all too impressed with his stardom to say much of anything.

They sipped the drinks in silence, when he had brought them; she smiled at him sweetly. "Thanks, Samson." The stillness was companionable; the boat rocked gently; it was the first time he had been aware of it all evening, surprising himself.

He smiled at her, looking deep into her eyes, leaning forward.

"Do you know . . . we've almost quarreled already?"

"You've almost quarreled," she corrected gently.

"I almost wish we had," he said. "Then we could kiss and make up."

"We could kiss anyway," she said, and rose from the table, taking his hand. "Come. I know a place. . . ."

## *Chapter 11*

He was half in love with her by the time they steamed into a French port, the end of their voyage. Because of the U-boat scares as they neared the Channel, great secrecy was kept as to where they would make port; or perhaps the orders continually changed. It was thought at first they would dock in Liverpool, or maybe Southampton, and thence cross to Le Havre. Instead the boat pulled into the harbor at St. Nazaire, a city swollen with the commerce of war. "We made it," said Solange, shivering in her short moleskin cape. "With God's help," said a voice behind her. She turned. "Were you afraid, Father?"

"You can bet your bottom dollar, little lady," said the priest, though his merry eyes belied him. "But it's always God's Will—we



have to remember that. . . . However, two troopships went down just this week in the Channel."

"I didn't know that!" she said, her eyes widening.

"The crew wouldn't want to alarm you," he said gently. "I was told—perhaps they thought I had some pull," and he glanced upward, smiling, "You know, above . . ." Father Pat was a youngish chaplain from a Boston parish; square-built and strong, he looked, she thought, even on the swaying deck, as if he were *planted*; he had a singular smile, extraordinarily sweet, and a round, guileless face. He was traveling with a party of some half-dozen nuns, of a nursing order, all in varying degrees of middle age. Father Pat looked about him now, saying, "I must find my girls . . . ah, there you are, my beauties. Come!" Soft, twittering giggles came from their dusty black draperies. "Group yourselves, girls. All here?" More twitterings, for they never separated; they bumped now, gently, like a cluster of hens following the farmer, looking toward the priest for directions.

"I must see about our billeting . . . our clearances." He turned back. "This is not goodbye . . . we'll meet again."

"I hope so," said Solange, and watched the odd little procession leave the deck. "I like him," she said.

"So do I," said Sammy.

He brooded a little on the priest's last words; for who could know? He might be whisked away by his Church or whatever organization sponsored him. As might they all. "Shall we be separated, do you think?" he asked, rather anxiously.

"Not for a while, anyway," said Solange, positively. "I had it from the horse's mouth." They both began to smile; the head of the Red Cross chapter was long in the tooth and melancholy. "He does rather bray, Manning. I forbore to mention it," said Solange. "But did you hear him at breakfast? Right across the room . . ."

"Do I count as Red Cross?" asked Sammy.

"Definitely. You are their lion."

"We sound like a zoo."

"Well . . . prize lion. They'd put you behind bars if they could. . . . No, I'm quite sure we'll all be going to Paris . . . all the Red Cross people. I don't know about the others."

There had been more passengers on the first deck than Sammy had counted on: their own Red Cross people, officials, nurses, drivers, entertainers; the YMCA people; the Salvation Army; a few others, smaller groups, church people. Enough, at any rate, to fill up the cabins and make it impossible to be really alone for very long;

they had managed to kiss, lingeringly, in every dark corner of the deck, swaying against each other above the dark roll of the night sea, bracing themselves on strange, hulking metal shapes wet with icy spray. They had walked hand in hand, miles, it seemed, around and around the slippery, tilting deck; they had spent hours in the salon-bar at the same gilt table they had first discovered, the last to leave, stumbling and giggling in the darkened corridors to their separate cabins. Their eyes had locked, conspiratorially, at meals, around the big table, the Captain's table, with its sprinkling of the prettiest girls and the most important men.

Each evening, after dinner, Sammy had donned his white street-cleaner's garb and his wig—he had a wig now, easier to manage—and put on a sketch for the servicemen on the big army deck. He improvised for encores, calling up impossible situations out of his head, inspired by the unaccustomed presence of an audience. Mostly he did all the parts, turning to face his invisible self opposite; once, though, in a more complicated sketch, he enlisted the help of Solange. She was oddly out of place in such a situation, no good at all to him; what was meant to be merely a pretty foil turned, in her hands, to a manic clown, grossly overdone and not at all funny. "I told you I was not a comedienne," she said.

"You're so pretty," he said. "Why can't you just stand there? That's all that's needed."

She laughed, rather nastily, and answered, with scorn, "Stick to Laverne. I can't do that kind of stuff."

Any of the other girl volunteers would have been fine, but out of loyalty he did not suggest it, and never tried the sketch again.

Except for the man from the Metropolitan, a baritone named Rizzo, the talent on the ship was scant: a few musicians, a very old contortionist with a sad, seamed face like an ancient monkey, whose bones creaked despairingly as they wound themselves into the positions of his routines, and the dozen or so bright-faced girls, eager, and a little scared, who were going to make doughnuts and fudge in the canteens and dance selflessly till dawn. Since these duties were not yet called for, they stood about, pretty and gauche, smiling with stiff jaws, now and then joining in the singing. The baritone, a good sport, abandoned his arias, and gave them "Tipperary" and "There's a Long, Long, Trail A-winding." The servicemen seemed never to tire of these war tunes; they would sing along, over and over, every night, tears standing in their eyes, while the rich Italian voice soared above the wail of two violins.

"Oh, not 'Roses of Picardy' again!" cried Solange softly the last night out. "Give me your guitar for a moment—do you mind?" she called to one of the little band, lounging against the piano. She bent her head to it, plucked a string, tightened it, rippled a chord. "It ought to be a banjo," she said, smiling, and began to sing "Oh, Susannah," tapping her foot and swaying, throwing back her head. Her voice was not much, though there were a couple of low, thrilling notes in it; she knew what to do with it, however, delivering most of the lines in an easy, "talking" style, singing the refrain with a kind of foggy wistfulness. Her white throat throbbed, her long eyes beckoned, her hair glowed deep and dark, old bronze in the soft, smoke-dim light; she was beautiful and strange. Siren of the troopship, Sammy thought, his mind running to captions, from old habit.

Her public personality, her performing self, *was* rather sirenlike, seductive, hinting of fleshly pleasures. Her somewhat spare body grew lissom, her elongated waist and Egyptian shoulders softened and rounded, she seemed to undulate; her unforgettable face burned like a brand; her husky voice crooned and caressed the jaunty, plaintive ballads. She gave them one or two Negro songs, a spiritual, and a little French nursery tune; this last she taught to her listeners as she went, a simple ditty about counting, with a catchy melody. They loved her, of course, and would not let her go, lifting her onto the piano and calling for song after song. She grew hoarse in the end and, smiling, finished her last number in pantomime, the strong young voices ringing around her as she beckoned them on; it was well past midnight before they got away.

"Where did you learn to do that?" demanded Sammy. He was much impressed by her authority and confidence. "You might make a living at it."

She laughed. "Well, in a way I have. I used to sing between the acts on the showboat. Most of the audiences are so ignorant they'd just leave, otherwise . . . or maybe get drunk and start a fight. They bring their jugs of homemade moonshine, you know. If you don't keep them interested . . ." She made a gesture of tipping up a jug, and laughed again. "It's the way the Negroes sing. I learned it from them."

"But you played the guitar, too!"

"Oh, just chords. Anybody can do that. I'm better with a banjo, it's lighter."

He shook his head admiringly. "What else can you play?"

"Oh, anything, really. Not well—just by ear. I haven't had any lessons."

"Piano?"

She shrugged. "I guess so . . . well enough."

"Maybe you could play for me . . . the sketches would be better. You know, the way they do in the theaters when they show the movies."

She smiled. "I'm supposed to be an ambulance driver—remember?"

He frowned. "I still don't know why you volunteered for that. Why didn't you come over as an entertainer?"

"They don't want unknowns. I didn't have a chance in the world."

"Well, just a canteen girl, then."

"And make candy?" She was contemptuous. "Like all these little doll-faces? At least I'll be doing something useful."

"It's a man's job."

She stiffened on his arm; even in the dark he could see her eyes glitter; she let out her breath in a loud sigh. "Oh, well . . . it's too late to quarrel. Otherwise I'd swat you for that. Let's just say it's what I wanted . . . and at least I'm out of Cape Girardeau. I thought it would never happen! And I'll make some money for a change. God, I'm sick of being poor. . . ."

He thought of her words, looking at her in the morning light. She looked so lovely, so smart, like a girl in a fashion drawing. Though, close to, he could see that the fur cape she wore was worn and flattened, thin as velvet; not warm enough, surely, for this chill October sea wind. It only covered her shoulders, though there was a muff to match; he noticed that she kept her hands inside.

"I'm cold," he said. "Shall we go inside?"

"Oh, not just yet. I want to see—" She hung out over the rail.

"There's nothing to see. St. Nazaire doesn't even look French."

"That's because it's swarming with American soldiers. But just look there—in the distance." She pointed. A gray spire, needle-thin, aimed its point at the sky; below, where it rose from the far rooftops, was the square belfry, with the unmistakable Gothic arches set in, and next to it, a little lower, the round tower of some medieval building, massy and forbidding. "You see? France. Gaul. So old . . . I always thought we were."

"What, old?"

"No, silly! I always thought the Savages were French—way, way back."

"I don't think so. Italian."



She turned a swift, delighted face. "Commedia dell' Arte?"

He shook his head, rueful. "I don't even know what that is. I only got through the eighth grade."

"Samson! I shall have to educate you!"

"I hope that's a promise," he said, smiling at her. It was the kind of thing he had been saying lately with girls. They seemed to like it, but she wore a little frown, and did not answer, turning back to the quay.

The cobbles ended after a few feet, and there were railroad tracks, a maze of them that crossed and crisscrossed. A few cars stood idle, uncoupled; there were faded letters painted on their sides: NESLE-SOMME and L'OISE ESPRESS. As they watched, a whole train, boxcars on a puffing engine, backed in, right down to where the tracks met the cobblestoned wharf. A broad gangplank creaked down slowly beneath them; they craned their necks to see. "Don't tell me they're going to load up freight," said Sammy. "We'll never get off."

"No . . . My God, look!" Columns of men, American soldiers, four abreast, were marching on the wooden walkway. The doors of the freight cars were slid open and the first soldiers climbed in. Petty officers, French and American, stood directing the columns, packing the men in like cattle, by the hundreds. They were fresh-faced and laughing, cropped young heads above olive-drab uniforms, shouldering pounds of gear, shouting back and forth. As each car was filled, a chain was fastened across its open door; the men were packed solid, hanging out and waving. Someone started up a tune, "Old MacDonald had a farm. . . ." Raucous voices took it up, beating out the nursery words, whistling and stamping. A little knot of women, shawled, in wooden pattens, stood watching, townspeople. An older woman pushed forward a younger one, shy. The girl reached up a package at the door of the car; a cheeky fellow took it, grinning. "Parley-voo?" She shook her head, giggling, making signs that he should open it. He held it up; a huge shout went with it, and laughter. A suit of knitted red underwear. He held it in front of himself, posturing; the girl nodded and smiled, hugging herself, miming to show how warm it was. As the car pulled out, several other women, grown bolder, ran forward to thrust gifts into the outstretched hands: a muffler, socks, a pair of striped mittens. "Thanks, girlie . . . *Merci! Merci! Thanky!*" The car pulled slowly out; the women stood in the tracks, looking after it; one of them buried her face in her big apron, her shoulders shaking. Sammy wondered if the knitted offer-

ings had been meant for other men: husbands, sons? Other men who would not be coming back.

They watched silently as another freight pulled up and the whole process of loading began again. Father Pat came alongside them; he made a soft, commiserating sound in his throat. "War," he said. "It's not very pretty, is it?" His face was tranquil, but the hand that held his rosary showed white at the knuckles.

"Father," said Solange, almost whispering. "Where are they sending them? Are they going to Paris?"

"Oh, no, my dear . . . not Paris. The other way. They won't be announcing it, but those freight trains are bound for the front." He nodded slowly. "Yes—boxcars—that's the quickest transport . . . for the most men. . . ."

After a moment Solange turned; her eyes were bright with tears. "I'm cold now . . . now I'm cold," she said. "I could use some coffee."

## *Chapter 12*

In Paris they saw the Mendelssohn Wax picture, made months ago but only now released in Europe. It was the tale of a ravished Belgian refugee girl, an unashamed piece of propaganda, the story line vulgar and mawkish. Laverne starred, and Mendelssohn, who had directed the film himself, had wisely limited the footage on her, ruthlessly cutting her big scenes, leaving the acting to her costar, who played the villainous German general. This was a tried-and-true character actor with many years of experience on the stage; his accomplished performance carried the picture, and the softly lit, half-out-of-focus close-ups of Laverne were extremely effective; critics were hailing her as a new film personality, another Lillian Gish. Her screen image was extremely fragile, even ethereal; the camera had caught an elusive purity of line; the strange stare of her light eyes became mysterious and beautiful, void as the stars.

When the lights came on after the picture, Sammy sat silent beside Solange; he had been deeply moved, his heart stirred by old memories. Solange lit a cigarette. "You can't smoke in a theater!"

hissed Sammy. "In Paris you can," said Solange, blowing out smoke. "See!" She pointed to the ashtray attached to the seat in front. "I didn't realize it before. Too bad—it would have helped me through the picture."

"Didn't you like it?" said Sammy, aghast.

"Like it! My God, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a work of genius beside it!"

"Oh, the story," he said. "I grant you the story is a little bit unbelievable . . . but didn't you think Laverne was good? I think it's the best thing she's done."

"Well, she hasn't done much, has she? You can hardly call those Lady Laverne parts in your comedies a test of acting."

Innately kind, Solange forbore to say she thought Laverne had not a shred of talent, could not, in fact, act her way "through a paper bag," as actors are fond of saying. At the same time, she suspected, as lovers do, that Sammy had adored Laverne, perhaps did still; she felt a twinge of dislike for the face that had just now filled the screen, but said only, "Did she always used to be so thin? When you were younger, I mean. She looks as if she might break in two."

"It's just a look," said Sammy. "She's quite strong really."

"Tough as an old boot, I know," thought Solange. She shuddered delicately. "Let's get some air, shall we? I feel as though my head will crack in two . . . or perhaps it's the picture." She smiled wickedly.

She shrugged into her heavy serge cape; Solange was in uniform now, Red Cross issue, amazingly becoming, with its Sam Brown-belted waist and swinging skirt. It was typical of the Red Cross, said the cynics among them, that they should have spent six weeks already in Paris, idle, with a dozen shiny new ambulances, idle too, ranged in line at the entrance to the American Hospital. It was said that there was not enough petrol for these huge machines, with their great horsepower and heavy bodies like moving-vans; there was rust already on the fenders, and some of the tires had been cut, for the hospital stood on the edge of Montmartre and the streets were dark for the duration of the war. Servicemen and officers crowded the city, French, British, and now American; they prowled like tourists all day in Versailles and the Tuileries, though the weather was growing bitter; at night they could be seen, melancholy, staked out at a table in a dingy little café, or six deep at the bar of a smoky Pigalle dive. Discipline was slack; nothing was off limits; the brothels did a thriving business. The casualties in the hospital wards were not wounded, but

venereal cases, though prophylactics were handed out every day at the army dispensaries and their use was supposed to be mandatory. Sammy had accepted a pocketful, blushing, but as yet had had no occasion to try them. He lived in fear that he would drag out a cellophane packet along with his change or his lighter. Though perhaps, he thought, Solange would not know what they were for. He patted his uniform pockets now to check, just in case; money on the right, lighter, left; he shoved the bulge of the crackling packets farther down, and took her arm. They were going to La Chatte.

La Chatte was a café on a side street near the Officers' Club and the hospital; there was nothing to distinguish it from a dozen others except that it happened to be there and served good onion soup, dark with Marsala, and homemade cheeses; in a city famous for its cuisine, the Red Cross had American cooks. Here were no dough-boys to be seen, no *poilus*, no Tommies; there were officers of all ranks and a generous sprinkling of civilians—for the most part, actors from the Odeon. As soon as Solange and Sammy came through the little curtained door, before their eyes could pierce the half-dark and the fog of cigarette smoke, they heard the actors' table, a fast spatter of animated French, larded with laughter.

"*Eh, voilà! Ici, ma petite!*" A rich voice rose above the others.

"It's Aristide!" cried Solange. They threaded their way through the tables to where the actors sat, two tables pushed together near the bar. A huge man rose to greet them, smacking each soundly on either cheek, his own round face ballooning with pleasure. "How beautiful you are, my dear—as always! But no matter . . . I have done it! I, Aristide Le Gros! I have captured you for two whole weeks! The Red Cross has given you leave!"

"I never thought you'd do it!" exclaimed Sammy. "How did you manage?"

"Mr. Manning—how do you call him? Horsy? I have promised him a part in the picture!"

Aristide Le Gros was a film-maker, French, quite famous in artistic circles; the more erudite periodicals in Europe, and even in America, featured articles and essays on his work from time to time. He had been a film pioneer, starting as a boy with the great Georges Méliès; he was now somewhere in his forties, too old and, as he said, too fat for war, though he had been making pictures for the French War Office since 1914. Aristide was indeed quite large, outsize, and tall as well, true to his name; he looked like a Turk, fierce and piratical, except for the round red cushions of his cheeks, and a rare, disarming



smile. His hair was black and looked as though it were painted on his round skull; his eyes were small, black, and glittering, like pieces of jet, and he wore a thin mustache, carefully waxed and turned up at the ends. His great bulk tapered to surprisingly graceful hands and feet; his starfish fingers were as expressive and delicate as poems. He dressed exquisitely in the style of the old Latin Quarter: wide-brimmed Trilby hat, white poet's collar, black string tie; his suits, often black velvet, were fastidiously tailored, above pointed, shiny, black dancing pumps.

Aristide had spotted Solange doing her turn, this time with a banjo, on a Red Cross night at the Officers' Club; he had fallen in love, professionally speaking, with the planes of her face, and had been quietly pulling strings to get her for a picture version of *Lysistrata*. It was not easy, of course, since she had signed a War Volunteer contract with the Red Cross. But now it seemed he had managed it, in his devious way.

"I never knew Horsy—I mean, Mr. Manning—wanted to be in pictures!" Solange accepted the chair he drew up for her and sat down.

"Does not everyone?" said a vivid-faced actress from the end of the table; her English was execrable, but it drew a laugh. Someone clapped and cried, "*Ecoutez!*"

Sammy said, "My God, Aristide—what can he play?"

Aristide waved an eloquent hand. "The smallest bit, naturally! I have the very part . . . an Equestrian!"

Solange laughed with the others, but said, "Isn't that Roman?"

"Quite so, my dear," said Aristide. "We shall have to bill him as 'a cavalry officer' . . . but how does a beautiful girl like you know about Roman classes?"

"My mother was a schoolteacher." Solange smiled. "But is it really true? Will I be able to play it? It's an awfully short time, two weeks. . . ."

"Not for Le Gros!" he answered. "I have made films in two days!"

The actors at the table laughed and groaned, making signs of cutting their throats, and rolling their eyes up in mock exhaustion; many of them had worked for him.

"Oh, Lord," said Sammy, laughing, "I know what you mean. In the early days I made whole pictures in half a day, sometimes. Of course, I was younger then."

Everyone roared, for Sammy's youth was a byword in the profession; even in Europe he was something of a prodigy.

"I tried to get you, too, Samson," said Aristide, looking at him speculatively. "But as you are accountable to the Army as well, it was impossible. Would you have done it? I cannot pay very well . . . My pictures do not make money. . . ."

"That wouldn't matter," said Sammy, "if I liked the part. I'm sure you pay more than Uncle Sam! But—now that I know I can't do it, tell me what part . . . ?"

"I had thought of you opposite Solange here. A comedy part, yes—it is all a comedy, no?" And he laughed, his vast bulk shaking with it. The French actors smiled politely; they knew little English, though Aristide spoke almost without accent. "But not a clown . . . such as you play in America, no. Without your face paint and wig, you are a very handsome young man, almost pretty . . . the girls would adore you." And he winked at Solange. She was startled to see red creep up from Sammy's collar; he spoke quickly.

"Pretty is not a word we use . . . to describe men, you understand." Sammy had picked up some French words already, but he was not equal to this task. "It sounds like a . . . a . . . *une femme?* . . . *fille?* . . . It makes me sound like a sissy."

Aristide puckered his forehead. "Sissy? I do not know the word."

Solange made a gesture with her wrist, delicate, boneless, and raised a haughty, petulant brow.

"Ah . . . *hermaphrodite!*"

Solange shrugged. "I guess . . ."

"The homosexual, no?"

She nodded.

Aristide turned to Sammy. "A thousand pardons, *mon petit.*" He shrugged in his turn, spreading his hands and saying something, French, a swift sentence. The others at the table roared appreciatively, and someone made a rude gesture and spat out a short word, probably even ruder.

Solange, discomfited by the explicit gesture, muttered, "I wonder just how filthy that was."

"That," said Aristide, "is '*fric-frac*' . . . *patois* . . . slang. Very low slang—of the gutter." And he wiggled a finger at the table. "We must behave like classical actors . . . *acteurs d'Academe.* . . ." They laughed, repeating his words delightedly, trying out the English. It was infectious; the two Americans found themselves smiling broadly, feeling comfortable in this actors' world, not so very different from their own. Someone passed a carafe of red wine. There was the business of pouring it, and then Aristide held up his glass.

"To *Lysistratel*!" Solange took a long swig of her wine.

Sammy murmured, "Go easy on that red stuff . . ." and he made a little comic face, holding his stomach.

Solange finished her wine and held out her glass for more. "I'm very thirsty . . . and I've had my diarrhea already, thank you! Lightning doesn't strike twice, or so they say."

Sammy was embarrassed; he did not think girls should be so outspoken. But Aristide shook his head. "It *can* strike twice, believe me. . . . It's not very good, that wine, anyway. Let's have champagne!" He beckoned to the café owner, saying a few swift French words. The man bowed. "Come, *mes amis*, I'll show you something interesting." He pushed back his chair. "Follow me."

They crossed the room behind the owner, going through a small door, set low in the wall, ducking their heads. They went down a flight of stone steps, very steep; hollows were worn in each stair, the work of centuries. They emerged into a cellar, low and dark, lit only by the lantern the owner held; the walls were made of great blocks of stone, and huge, rusted chains hung from great spikes in the wall. There were rows and rows of bottles in racks, lying on their sides; cobwebs draped them, and hung from the casks which stood in the corners. A very small window was set in one wall, very high, and barred.

"Twelfth-century," said Aristide, as proudly as if he owned it. "One day I will film a scene here . . . it only wants the right story."

"The wine is that old?" whispered Solange.

He smiled. "No, no. Not quite—though some of it is eighteenth-century. . . . No, the building above has been rebuilt, but the cellar—probably a dungeon—kept for wine. See the chains? Undoubtedly a dungeon . . . a keep of some sort. Probably a castle or a small fort stood above it once. Pulled down in the days of the Revolution, as so many were. The owner knows nothing, a peasant! Bought by his father, but they did not even keep the deed." He shook his head sadly. "And so we will never know its history. So much history here in Paris . . . one longs to dig and delve. But who has the time? We have to make pictures!" And he laughed his rich, deep laugh. "Let us choose our wine. Here—" He beckoned and pointed. "We will have a half-dozen of the Neury Sec. You have ice?"

"Ah, non, m'sieu." The owner shook his head regretfully. "But it is cold, very cold," he said in French. "Feel it, M'sieu Le Gros. . . ." And he held out a bottle.

"What do you think, mam'selle?" Aristide turned to Solange.

She smiled. "You are talking to an American. I have no idea . . . but it seems all right to me. It's certainly very cold."

"It should be chilled, but . . ." And he shrugged again. "*C'est la guerre.*" It was the first time they had heard that expression; it would certainly not be the last; they were to grow very tired of it before the war was ended.

They were well into their third bottle, toasting all the way, when they heard an American voice. "Miss Solange . . . ?"

"Oh, God, it's Horsy!" cried Solange softly. Sammy turned to the doorway; sure enough, it was old Horseface Manning, the Red Cross director and Solange's boss. He wore, like Sammy, lieutenant's stripes above the Red Cross badge on his armband. His face was pulled in longer, sadder lines than ever; his anxious eyes scanned the room.

"Here, Mr. Manning!" called Solange. "Here I am!"

"Oh, Miss Solange!" he panted. "I have run in and out of every restaurant on the square. I'm sorry, Miss Solange. I know I promised . . . but I have to go back on it. I need you! There are wounded . . . you must leave at dawn!"

"You are not sending her to the front?" Sammy rose, his heart pounding.

"No, no, of course not! But we have no men left to drive, and there are many wounded—from battles in the country east of Toul and Charmont. There has been heavy fighting, we just got it on the wireless. Some are at Bar-sur-Aube, there's a barracks hospital there, but not nearly large enough, and more are coming in already . . . and they expect mule ambulances all through the night, carrying them out. There is no fighting at Bar-sur-Aube . . . no danger. But it is a long way, nearly a hundred miles. You ought to leave as soon as it is light."

"Yes, yes . . . I'll be ready," said Solange, a little dazed.

"I'm sorry, Monsieur Le Gros." Manning, too, shrugged his shoulders. "How Gallic we are all getting," Solange thought, "we will never be the same, we Americans." Manning was saying, "I hope it will not ruin your plans, to postpone the picture a little."

"*C'est la guerre,*" said Aristide, again. "We will shoot around you, my dear," he said, bowing to Solange; she did not much like the picture he evoked, thinking of the morrow. But she smiled, a bit tremulously, and said, "Oh, I hope you can. I would hate to have my career nipped in the bud. . . ."



"It is a promise, my dear. I will wait for you. I will not do the picture without you."

"Oh, dear, I hope I'm worth it," she thought. "Thank you, Aristide," she said, rising from the table. "I think I'd better go now . . . try and get some sleep. No, no more wine." She smiled and waved the proffered glass away. "Can't drive when drunk, you know."

"I'll go with you, shall I?" asked Sammy, rising, too.

"Yes, please . . . Goodbye, everyone! *Au 'voir!*"

They walked past the street where the Red Cross building stood; the new ambulances were still outside. "I wonder if I'll get one of them," said Solange. "I wonder if they'll go—after all this time." She sighed.

"Are you nervous?" asked Sammy.

"A little," she admitted. "Everything is happening so suddenly. I haven't practiced on these things . . . they ought to have let me . . . and I don't have any idea where this place is. A hundred miles! I hope they have a map!"

"And petrol," said Sammy, smiling.

"You would think of that! I guess I'd better carry some extra cans."

They stopped in front of the pension where the Red Cross girls were billeted; it was quite dark, the streetlight was out. They kissed, again and again, as they did every night, leaning against the outer wall.

"Oh, God," said Sammy, his breath coming fast, "I wish I could come in with you. Couldn't we slip past? Maybe she's fallen asleep."

"The *concierge*? No such luck . . . she's like Grandma Emmaline, she never sleeps." She put her hands up on either side of his head and pulled him down to kiss her again. "Besides, my heart wouldn't be in it . . . not this time. I'll see you soon. *Au 'voir*, darling . . ." And she slipped through the gate. "Take care," he called softly into the darkness, hoping she heard him.

He walked on toward his own billet, remembering her words, "Grandma Emmaline, she never sleeps." He wondered if it meant that she had tried to slip past another sleepless old woman. And if so, who had been with her. And had they, perhaps, been successful? He worried at it all the way home; he did not worry at all about her safety.

## Chapter 13

There were two nurses, English, in Solange's ambulance; nice girls, but bone-weary. They had made this same trip to Bar-sur-Aube yesterday, there and back with wounded for the Paris hospital, falling into bed at midnight and now up at earliest light to do it all over again. "At least we know the way this time," said Veronica, the younger and more talkative of the two. "Yesterday we took three wrong turns. So many of the roadsigns are down with the bombings."

"There have been bombings on the road we're taking?" asked Solange, struggling with the heavy wheel. She was not really alarmed, it was just that it all seemed, still, at this awful hour and the sun not yet up, rather unreal. They had given her one of the brand-new ambulances, the one with the rusted fender; now in front of headquarters there was only the one with slashed tires; all the rest had been requisitioned for the convoy and were strung out behind, the drivers Frenchmen whom she had never seen before. Concentrating on her driving, for the van was heavy and stiff to control, she missed part of the English girl's answer. ". . . dogfights nearly every day," she was saying, "and then the Boche are always after our reconnaissance balloons, too. Sometimes they drop a bomb or two for good measure."

"Dogfights? You mean airplanes?" Solange had not yet even seen one in the air, though there had been a field with several, tarpaulin-covered, glimpsed from the St. Nazaire train. She felt even more unreal; a little sickish, too, with the morning's watery coffee sloshing around in her stomach. "Why can't the French make decent coffee?" she said aloud.

Veronica laughed. "We always complain of the tea," she said. "They simply will not bring the kettle to a full boil. One cannot impress it upon them. The coffee—well, I don't mind the *café-au-lait*, it's rather pleasant really, a nice, milky drink. You should settle for that."

"I suspect you're right," said Solange. "This, of course, was Red Cross coffee. I trusted it."

"Splashing about a bit, is it?" said Veronica. "Would you like a

bun? Soak it up, rather. Here." She handed Solange a *croissant*. "I'll have one, too. Never can eat when I'm setting off somewhere."

"It's buttered!" cried Solange.

"Stolen," was the answer. "I took all the butter on the table. We deserve it, ducks."

They munched companionably. "Like another?" asked Veronica.

"What about—?" Solange indicated the body of the ambulance, where the other nurse was riding.

"Oh, she's asleep. Several streets ago . . . I checked."

"I didn't catch her name."

"That's Elsie, ducks. She's WAC."

Solange turned, raising her eyebrows in a question.

"Women's Auxiliary Corps. She's been in since 1914, the beginning." She was silent for a moment or two; they had come out of Paris now and were on a narrow, black-topped road, very winding. "I'll talk," she said. "You needn't answer . . . it's a rotten road . . ." Trees went by, stripped now of leaves, black lace against the still gray sky; a farm, tiny, in the distance, and sheep grazing near, looking up at them with stupid, mild faces. A small boy watched, too, his eyes as solemn as the sheeps'; a faded blue smock covered him to the waist, but he was bare below, skinny and blue, his sad little genitals shrunk with the cold. "God, the children in this country!" said Veronica. "It breaks your heart. Still, he's luckier than most. Belongs to that farm, I expect. There's been no fighting around here—yet. Here, you go to the right here. . . ." They had come to a crossroads, unmarked.

"You're sure?" asked Solange, braking and turning.

"Positive. I'm getting pretty good at landmarks by now. I've made a lot of these trips." Her voice trailed away. She lit a cigarette and handed it to Solange.

"Thanks!" said Solange, surprised. "How did you know I wanted one?"

"You looked like a smoking type."

"Lord, yes," laughed Solange. "I've been smoking since I was thirteen. I'll smoke anything, even Gaulois."

Veronica laughed. "Bloody awful things, aren't they? These are Players. Just got a whole carton—fifties—in the post."

"They're good," said Solange.

"How did you manage . . . smoking at thirteen? My mum would have perished."

"Mother didn't much like it, but what could she do? There's al-

ways a cigarette hanging from Daddy's lip, and Grandma smokes a pipe!"

"Hillbillies?" Veronica was intrigued.

Solange gave a great snort of laughter, almost choking. "No." She shook her head regretfully. "Though Grandma would suit the part . . . No—she lived with the Indians for a while . . . married one, in fact. I'm one quarter Comanche."

"Ah," said Veronica. "That explains that exotic face. I was wondering. Actually, I thought maybe you were Algerian French, or even Eurasian."

"Actually, I'm not French at all. My name isn't Sauvage, it's Savage. I just liked the sound, and the look of it—for the stage."

"Oh, you're on the stage!"

"Well, I guess you could call it that. Showboat. We're showboat folks."

"I don't even know what that is."

"We play on a showboat on the Mississippi River. There are lots of them in America. Used to be more, they're sort of dying out. But my family was always in them . . . and before that, other stages, one kind or another, for centuries, actually. We're an old stage family . . . Grandma never stops talking about us."

"Savage . . . Miranda Savage?"

Solange nodded.

"My God, she was a really great actress—right up there with Mrs. Siddons. There's a Romney portrait of her—I've seen it. At the National . . . or maybe it's the Museum. Come to think of it, you look a bit like it—the cheekbones or something, or the way you hold your head, maybe. Why, that's bloody exciting, you know?"

"Yes, I guess so . . . if you haven't grown up with it." She was diffident, but then said, "There's supposed to be a theater in London that was given to the first Savage, Sir Hercules, by Henry the Fifth, after the Battle of Agincourt. It's a long time ago . . . I guess it couldn't still be there. . . ."

"Would it be the Agincourt Field?"

"Something like that, or just the Agincourt."

"The Agincourt Field! We used to go there when I was tiny for the Christmas Pantomime! Fancy it belonging to you!"

Solange laughed. "Well, not really. . . ."

"Your family, anyway. That must be the one. I remember, even as a child, it was terribly old, a tiny place. The seats were small even for children . . . and the stage was little, too, and came way out into the



audience. The Christmas Fairy would be almost in your lap in the good seats! And there was an old coat-of-arms over the door. . . . And later, I think, it was a Punch and Judy theater—I'm sure of it. But tell me more—it's so fascinating!"

"Well, Samson says the family went to Italy and became part of the *Commedia dell' Arte* for a while."

"Samson?"

"Sammy Savage—that's his stage name."

"Spotless Sam? Oh, my God. What is *he*, your brother?"

"Oh, no! We've just met. He's in the Red Cross with me. He's another branch of the Savages. He started in vaudeville. But, way back, it's the same family."

"Well, he's wonderful, he really is . . . almost as good as our Charlie Chaplin. Is he nice?"

"I think so."

"We turn here . . . gravel, it's awful on the tires, but it doesn't go on for long. Bear left at the next signpost, there's a stone church."

They passed now a whole family digging in the earth, straightening up to stare, and afterward, a priest just walking, it seemed to nowhere. Though it must have been to his church, for they came to it farther along and made their turn. Suddenly Veronica said, "Spotless Sam . . . are you having an affair with him?"

"Oh," said Solange, a little prim. "Oh, no—of course not. I hardly know him."

"Don't go all Puritan on me, now . . . you're not that kind of a girl. And something in your voice . . . Well, it's none of my business, of course. But you might give it some serious thought, if the occasion arises . . . it's going to be a long war."

They rode in silence after that, but a friendly silence. The road was smooth again and the sun had come up, warming them and gilding the fields. Solange saw that they had got ahead of the convoy, and she idled the motor till it should come in sight. In the quiet they heard an unmistakable snore from the rear.

"Poor Elsie," said Veronica. "She's had it. No sleep at all last night. I heard her come in just as I was waking . . . never gets any sleep as long as there's a whole man and a bed."

Solange turned a shocked face. Veronica was amused. "What are you, a virgin?" Her voice had a raucous sound. She glanced at Solange; she had very blue eyes and that English fairness so bright that it passes for beauty. "I'm sorry . . . I didn't mean to be rude. But I forget you haven't been here very long. It stinks here." Her eyes

looked wet; Solange turned away, feeling awkward. She saw in the mirror the first car in the convoy rounding the bend; she started up, changing gear.

After a moment Veronica spoke. "Elsie's had a rotten time. She was engaged before the war started. Her boy packed it in right off . . . the first battle. Fresh out of Cambridge, all eager, England's finest and all that. They hadn't even one weekend together. She's been making up for it ever since. So you might say. It's not the same, of course.

"Me . . . I've had my weekend. At least I've had that, before—I don't even know where he is. Somewhere up near the German lines, that's all I know. Reggie—that's his name, isn't it awful? Reggie was my sweetheart for years, all through my life, just about. We would have been married by now. We got leave at the same time . . . last summer. We didn't even go home. Spent it in Liverpool, of all places. It was wonderful." She did not speak for a bit, then, "That's why I said what I did. You see so much death . . . and worse, as well. Some of them are worse. I mean—I guess if Reggie—I guess if it came to it I'd do the same as Elsie. Life's so short . . . and a life-time's so long." She glanced at Solange, and then laughed. "God, Veronica, my girl, you're as profound as a coot!"

All the same, thought Solange, it was profound. She was deeply stirred. A wonderful girl, Veronica. She had never met anyone like her.

"I like you, Veronica," she said. "I like you a lot."

"I like you, too, Solange. And—thanks for listening."

The road climbed, winding round and round a small mountain covered with scrubby evergreen bushes; they went slowly, near the edge, a sickening drop. Above them the sky was dazzling, the blue of a bird's wing, sheened over with silver in the wintry sun. "Oh, look," said Solange, on a breath. "A castle . . ."

Veronica laughed, gently. "A castle . . . another castle. You can't have seen many, you poor little Huckleberry Finn."

"Who's a Finn?" came a voice from behind them. "I knew a Finn once. . . . Oh, God, we're going up! I'm dizzy already. . . . What goes up has to come down! Speaking of the reverse, I need the WC."

"There's a village at the top of this hill, remember? Rather charming. We can get something to eat and a cool drink there . . . and there'll be some kind of squat hole. Or do you want to get out and make for the bushes? Solange, this is Elsie. She never sleeps except in cars."

"And sometimes not then, depending on the company." Elsie had a rough voice, deep and dark-sounding, but pleasant. "No offense meant, of course. But the sex is wrong."

Solange, who could examine her in the rear-view mirror, thought that she looked quite otherwise, quite like a lesbian. Not that she knew any, but how she imagined such a woman would look. Elsie had a square jaw and cropped hair; in her uniform, sitting down, she looked exactly like a British Tommy.

"You're the gorgeous one, aren't you? I saw you this morning, before I dropped off. I'm prepared to like you in spite of your looks, providing you keep your hands off my particular property. By that I mean, at this moment, Edward Bloody Manning, Lieutenant. He's good for a week, anyway—if I drink enough *vin ordinaire*."

Solange stared into the mirror, meeting Elsie's eyes. "Who do you mean? You can't mean—"

"Edward Bloody Manning, your boy Red Cross director."

Horsy, she meant Horsy! Solange swallowed her amazement and said, "That's all right . . . I promise. Cross my heart."

"That goes for you, too, Ronnie," said Elsie, fastening her eye on Veronica.

"He's not my type," said Veronica. "To each her own . . ." And she winked at Solange.

"Oh, do hurry, Gorgeous!" cried Elsie peevishly. "I've got me dear little legs crossed tight, but I can't answer for the upholstery much longer."

"It looks as though we're here," said Veronica. "I see the inevitable church spire. Just another bit, Elsie, ducks . . . don't breathe. . . ."

## Chapter 14

They passed three more villages before they came in sight of Bar-sur-Aube. It was nearly noon. "It seems like a great deal more than a hundred miles," said Solange; her arms ached from the heavy steering wheel, and a cramp was starting in her foot from the gas pedal, stiff with newness.

"A hundred miles as the crow flies, Gorgeous . . . unfortunately we're not crows. They always will do you this way, you just have to get used to it. It's always a hundred miles, or two hundred . . . they believe in round numbers, the Red Cross. Speaking of round numbers, I've got a new brassiere, got it in Paris last time."

"Oh, really?" said Solange, who didn't wear one.

"It's a bit tight, but ooh-la-la! Black satin! This uniform hides more than a heart of gold."

"That's a prostitute, heart of gold," said Veronica. "You mean a bleeding great Florence Nightingale heart."

"Right-o, ducks," said Elsie, unperturbed. "I wonder what we'll find in this little hellhole today."

"You *know*," said Veronica. "Hold your nose."

"Gangrene."

"Right-o, ducks. You win the lucky number. . . . Here we are!"

Bar-sur-Aube had been a town once; now it was not much more than a sprawling army camp. The few village huts were derelict, and long, low shacks had been thrown up in rows, shacks with flat tin roofs, stove-pipes sticking out of them, serving for chimneys, and corrugated tin sides. There were uniforms everywhere, guards, sentries, rifles, packs. A contingent of American soldiers marched in drill in the field beyond, their khaki suits barely discernible against the brown waste of the ground and hedge. Solange wondered if it had rained; there seemed to be mud everywhere, some of it sticky and black, some dried into gray ruts. She maneuvered the ambulance into a comparatively dry bit in front of the row of huts that were marked with a Red Cross. Veronica climbed out. "Well, gird your loins, Elsie."

"I rather resent that, old dear," said Elsie. "These are *wounded* remember? Even I draw the line somewhere."

Solange followed the two girls into the first hut. The smell assailed her, almost forcing her physically backward; she had never smelled anything like it. The bloody reek she recognized from butcher shops; the stink of rot, of foul drainage, too; but there was another, sharper odor that clogged the nostrils, a smell she did not know. "Gas!" muttered Elsie. "The poor buggers!"

Solange could not imagine singling anyone in that room out for pity; it was a nightmare scene. There were not enough cots; some of the men lay on stretchers on the floor. The white of bandages made dazzling patches in the poor light; most of these wounded wore more than one, and several were covered from head to foot, like Egyptian



mummies. One of these, close to where she stood, groaned over and over again, a kind of litany; from the faceless swathe of white it was dreadful to hear, an obscenity.

Elsie bent over him, then straightened up. "Gassed," she said. "I thought so. . . . It's almost the worst. If they can't get a wash immediately, it just goes on burning. And not many of the front trenches are equipped with showers." She moved on. Veronica sat beside a fresh-faced boy who looked no more than seventeen; below the hips he had only stumps, bloodily bandaged. He smiled up at the nurse, saying something; she bent close to hear, and spoke, kissing him on the forehead. "I'll be back," she promised.

To Solange she said, "You ought not to be here . . . you've done your job. And you have to drive back." Solange still stared at the legless boy. "He looks so young," she said in a dazed voice.

"Probably lied about his age," said Veronica. "Some of them do. . . . He's delirious—his legs are gangrenous . . . what's left of them. Must have a raging fever, though he says it doesn't hurt. Thinks I'm his sister. I'll ride with him. He's from Cheshire." Her eyes misted; she shook her head, as if to shake the tears away, denying them. "Solange, get out of here!" she hissed. "Go find the drivers' hut . . . you have to get some rest. We won't be very long—just whatever we can do to prepare them for the journey. Go on, now!" And she gave her a little push.

Solange sipped the hot black coffee that was handed to her in the third hut down, where the other drivers crowded in, making the small doorway dark. Their French was quick and coarse; she could not follow any of it. They were joking and laughing with some of the canteen girls, French too; several of the men eyed her, bold, hot looks; they were all of them older men, with craggy, seamed faces, strongly built people; the uniforms looked incongruous on them. Their eyes made her uncomfortable; she looked away. A very tall, thin, and, she thought, unmistakably British officer smiled down at her; he looked kind and a little quizzical. "Yes," she thought, "the uniform is British, a major"; she was a little slow still to recognize insignia. "Hello," she said, holding out her free hand. "I'm Solange Sauvage. I'm a Red Cross driver."

He whistled softly. "They've got you in strange company," he said, his eyes going to the men at the canteen counter. "The only girl, are you?"

"There are more of us . . . we're billeted in Paris . . . but the others don't really drive well enough yet. These ambulances are

heavy. There were supposed to be some replacements, men from the States." She glanced, too, at the other drivers. "I can't seem to understand a word. And I thought I was getting rather good."

"They're not French, they're Basques. That's Basque they're speaking. I don't wonder you couldn't understand it . . . nobody does."

"Oh." Her face was vivid with interest; the Englishman looked down at her, charmed. "I've read about the Basques, the Pyrenees, their mysterious origin, all that. So that's how they look!"

"Not really. Those are convicts."

She stared at him. He went on. "They're from French prisons, probably political prisoners. The Basque is a very independent creature. Don't worry . . . they're not dangerous criminal types or anything like that. The French are pretty well stripped of manpower, you know. They are forced to use whatever they can lay hands on. The war has hit them hardest. In the case of these drivers, they probably asked for volunteers—in return for freedom. And these took them up on it . . . a case of preferring to take the odd chance rather than the slow misery."

She took a sip of her coffee and made a little face. "I've let my coffee get cold . . . and it was the best I've had in France."

"I'll get you a refill," he said, taking the cup. When he came back with it, he said, "I wondered if I could have a ride back to Paris with you, I'd certainly enjoy the company more"—he smiled as he spoke—"seeing that I don't speak a very good Basque myself."

"Oh, I'd like that, if there's room. There are two nurses with me."

"They'll ride in back to tend the wounded. I can drive these things. Would you like some help, perhaps? Spell you a bit?"

"Oh, I'd be grateful. My arms ache, Major . . . ?"

"Oh, sorry," he said. "I'm dreadfully remiss. I'm Major Henly, Gerald Henly. I've got a weekend pass, drove down in the mule ambulance with this load, poor bloody blighters. Not my outfit . . . these were right up in No Man's Land. Haven't had the pleasure yet," he finished grimly. "Probably my turn soon. I'm looking forward to Paris, though. Hope my wife got the wire and will be there to meet me. Haven't seen her since 'fourteen. Got a laddie three years old I haven't even met."

"Oh, I do hope she did get your wire!" Solange said fervently.

He looked down at her, a straight kind of look, measuring. "You're a nice girl, Miss Sauvage. That's rather heart-warming, in a world where most beauties are bitches."

She had never heard that word before; obviously it was derogatory. But she thought, "Perhaps, since he also thinks I'm beautiful—perhaps I really might be good in pictures." Samson thought so, certainly, and Aristide. It was new to her, such admiration; back home she had been even something of a freak, among the slow Southern belles with their drawls and smiles, their pretty, vain ways. And she had never quite fitted in on the showboat stage, either; too tall and too strange-looking for ingenue parts, and too young for seconds. She had simply played whatever was left over, usually old women, or blackface. "Thank you. That's a nice compliment," she said, smiling again her brilliant smile, the black eyes lengthening impossibly, the dimple appearing beside the wide, strong mouth.

Elsie appeared in the doorway. "Time to head back, if you've had your rest. We've got most of them loaded up, poor chappies. Don't rush, finish your coffee—" She caught sight of the English major. "Oh-oh, what have we here?" She held out her square, strong hand. "Lieutenant L. C. Hallet here, Major," and saluted him briefly. "Cadged a ride, have you? Good boy. I'll have my hands full in the back . . . Veronica's up front in the second ambulance—you can keep Gorgeous here company. On the ride, that is. *I'll* see you later." She smiled the grin of a street boy. "What about these?" She gestured to the Basques. "Anybody speak their lingo?"

"A little," said the Major. He said a few words; the Basques grinned and filed out.

"L. C. it is, for Lucinda Carol, but everybody calls me Elsie . . . as in Dinsmore. *You* can call me anything you like, Major."

"I'll call you Lieutenant." But he smiled at her. "My wife is Lucy."

"Ouch!" said Elsie, wincing. "I guess I deserved that. Coming to Paris, is she?"

"I hope so."

"Good show! Not so good for me, though. I was looking forward. Maybe some other time . . . ?"

"Maybe," he answered, still smiling.

"Well . . . off with us." And Elsie walked out ahead of them.

"She's rather endearing, in an odd way," said the Major.

"Yes, she is," said Solange. "I like her. And Veronica, the other nurse, is really wonderful. A lovely person. I've just today met them . . . never met any English girls before. They're . . . not like Americans. I can't quite explain."

"I expect they seem a bit . . . tough. They've been through a lot, these girls."

"Yes," said Solange, gravely. "I can see that. . . . I wonder if I could take it. I don't know."

"You'll do," he said, just as gravely.

They had reached their ambulance; the convoy was in reverse now, and they would bring up the rear, the last car to start in the long line.

Veronica appeared from up ahead, rather breathless. "Sorry, ducks, I'll have to ride up front, the second ambulance. That's where they've put my Cheshire boy. I can't leave him, he's crying now. Crying for home."

"We'll manage," called Elsie from the body of the van. "Most of mine are pretty well sedated. See you, luv. Luck and all that . . ."

"Goodbye, Solange. Take care." And Veronica was gone, hurrying back to her new post.

"The Cheshire boy . . . he was delirious. Thought Veronica was his sister," Solange explained.

There was a strange sound, a long, low whistle, ominous. "Down!" said the Major, curtly, pushing Solange to the floor. The whine seemed to go on forever; then came a dull, deep thud, like the fall of an avalanche, somewhere behind the town. The Major released his pressure after a moment; they scrambled to their seats; he got out of the cab, looking toward the sound. Men had come running out of tents, and all the drivers ahead were looking into the sky, bright, and still noon-white. There were no clouds; nothing at all could be seen, except, far away, toward the north, a tiny rising of gray smoke. They all waited while the drivers conferred. When the Major got back in the cab, he said, "I think it was just a stray . . . probably a single plane, back that way. There were a few bombs this morning, but nothing anywhere near. We'll go on . . . everything looks clear up ahead."

They drove at an easy medium speed for a while; the road wound down the mountain, and Solange, braking, began to tire; it was hard work. The Major suggested that he take over; it was almost as though he sensed her weariness. As they changed seats, they fell behind the convoy, losing sight of the ambulances ahead on the curving road. "We'll catch up later," said Major Henly. "I don't like to push this thing—don't quite trust the bugger."

She found him an easy companion, like the nurses; "I quite like these English," she thought, and reflected, as well, that she, too, had much English blood in her veins. She told him her family history, recalling wryly that it was the third time in as many weeks that she



had done so. "I'll begin to believe it all as gospel soon," she thought.

"We're rather close to where Monmouth Harry fought, you know. All the terrain hereabouts is his, you might say. Agincourt is bloodied again . . . they've been fighting around there for quite some time. It's a sobering thought."

"Yes," she said. "Like a fool, I had hoped, back in the States, to see Agincourt, the site of the battle. . . . I'm not so good at geography."

"Pray God you don't," he answered, grimly. "Oh-oh . . . duck down and look at the sky, will you? I think I caught a flash of something."

Craning her neck, she saw, almost non-existent, a far gleam above. "The sky is so pale," she said, "but I think there is something . . . an airplane, do you think?"

"Could be. Maybe it's ours. Keep your fingers crossed."

They drove on; at the foot of the hill they saw the convoy far ahead. The ground was flat now, and the road bent to the left; it looked like a procession of ants, painfully slow. She saw the gleam above once more, and another beside it; the Major slowed and craned upward, too. "I'm afraid we're in for something," he said. "There's nothing for it but to keep going. We're in plain view here—no cover at all."

The gleams came closer, flying low; she could see them now, like toys, silver in the sun, one double-winged, one, smaller, with a single spread, darting like a bird. She saw the spurt of red fire, and the answering flash from the other plane. "It'll be a dogfight," said the Major. "The small fellow's ours."

"British?"

"I'm sure of it. See the sign on the side, there?"

She could not make it out. "The other one?"

"Boche," he said. "It'll be noisy. Better let what's-her-name know, in the back."

Solange pushed up the isinglass window and spoke, a few swift words.

"Oh, goody," said Elsie, gloomily. "Sit tight, Gorgeous . . . both of you."

The planes were ahead of them now, over the first ambulances in the convoy. "Shall we lag behind or catch up?" asked Elsie.

"Your guess is as good as mine," said the Major. "It's supposed to be safer together, but, I don't know—I'm inclined the other way just

now. Those fellows only carry a few bombs. He'll try to hit the bigger target, I should think. Look out—here it comes!"

That strange whine again, long and low, seeming to go right past their ears, and then a dreadful explosion and a blinding burst. They opened their eyes. "He's missed!" cried Elsie, softly. There was a huge black cloud to the right, quite far away; then another burst, in the same direction, only feet away from the first one. "Maybe that's the load," said the Major. "Maybe that's all he's got."

"I think he's hit!" cried Solange. They all looked upward; flames sprang from the German aircraft, and smoke spiraled upward. The plane tilted slowly, its wings dipping; it began to spiral downward, slowly, so slowly, as the black smoke spiraled from it to the sky. The British plane darted in, spitting fire in a steady crackle, so close now that they almost saw the pilots inside and the holes in the German airplane. Suddenly the Boche plane righted itself, directly over the ambulances ahead. The whole world seemed to explode before them, a vast burst that sent German plane, parts of ambulances, and earth flying into the air; in the quiet after—so horribly loud, that quiet—they saw a wall of flame.

"He's done it, the bloody bugger!" said Elsie, in a dead voice. "How many did he get?"

"It looks like three . . . the first three," said Major Henly.

"Oh, my God," said Elsie. "Oh, my God . . . Veronica . . ."

They were coming close now to the flaming wreckage. The second car had taken the direct hit; there was nothing left but a charred, twisted mass. Bits of the other two were flung far out into the fields on either side, black bits, unrecognizable. "Don't look," said the Major. "Stay here. That's an order, Lieutenant!" he snapped, as Elsie began to climb out.

"I'm a nurse, remember!"

"I'll let you know if there's anything for you to do. Sit there. Tend to your own wounded!" For cries and groans were coming from the back; the poor, bewildered men, immobile among the unknown devastation.

They heard her speak to them, softly; Solange marveled at the gentleness of her rough voice. "It's all over . . . we got the blighter. He's down. It's all over . . . there, there . . ."

"Nothing left," said the Major, as he climbed back into the cab. His face was like a piece of carved wood, the eyes blank. "There's nobody alive . . . not even enough to bury. We'll have to go on." He slumped over the wheel for a moment, then looked up as the victori-

ous British plane swooped low. They got a swift glimpse of a fresh young face; a hand waved, then a thumb turned down, and he was gone, flying off to the north, climbing.

The goggled face burned in Solange's mind; she saw it still.

"He was laughing!" she said, feeling stunned.

"Yes, well—those fellows, those air fellows . . . they see it all from up there, you know. They're not quite real, those fellows. Like old-time knights, I guess. He counts it a battle won. He downed the Boche."

He started the car; the convoy moved slowly on, past the burning wreckage; the smell was dreadful; choking.

They went on, a mile perhaps. "I have to be sick," said Solange. "Please . . ."

He stopped the car. "Go ahead," he said. "Take your time, there's a girl. . . ."

She came back to the car, after a moment. "I'm all right now. Would you like me to take over? I'm all right. I'd like to."

"Would it steady you?"

"I think so." She took the wheel.

The rest of the journey was like a dream; she remembered nothing of it, none of the villages, none of the signposts, though she followed the road and drove well.

Like a sleepwalker, she got out, checked in at headquarters, asked for Sammy, found him in the café, La Chatte, waiting, twisting his hands.

"Something happened," he said, looking at her eyes. "What happened, darling?"

"I can't tell you now . . . I can't talk now. Later . . ."

"You need a drink."

"Yes," she said. "I want a drink. Three drinks, maybe, or four." She took his hand, gripping it, intense, speaking very low. "And after . . . after the drinks, I want to go to bed with you. I want you to hold me very close . . ."

## Chapter 15

Sammy wanted to marry Solange. "Let's wait," she said. "If we make a baby, why, then I'll do it. . . . It'll be like Russian roulette," she added, smiling wickedly through a glaze of tears. He truly did not know what to make of her, but he loved her. He felt that he might die if he could not wholly possess this cool and fiery, elusive, fascinating girl.

She had been a virgin. "I can't think where to put my knees," she had muttered, disconcertingly. He showed her, at first, but, afterwards, he forgot.

"It will be better next time, really," she said. "I learn quickly."

"It was wonderful . . . so wonderful," he said.

He had heard the terrifying story of the trip; before they left the café, she had told him, brokenly, a little drunk on the whiskies.

". . . and so, you see, I felt I must be with you." And she quoted the words that the dead Veronica had said. "Life's so short—and a lifetime's so long." He thought they had a beautiful ring. Like something in a picture, and he wept, holding her hand.

"They're wonderful people . . . the English," she said.

Veronica, yes, he understood, and it was so sad. But the other one sounded like—well, she was really just a cut above a whore, wasn't she? But he said nothing, only thought. Suddenly he said, "And that major . . . did he just . . . pick you up?"

She stared at him. "He needed a lift back to Paris. I don't know what I'd have done without him. Oh, Samson, he's awfully nice. You'll see. You'll meet him."

He was jealous already. Jealous of everyone she spoke of, everyone who looked at her. He was ashamed of himself, and did not like to think he could be so foolish. "What will I do," he thought, "when she is famous and stared at by all the world?" For he knew, in his performer's heart, that it would happen.

He had taken her to a little, shabby hotel, the address muttered in his ear by Aristide. "It is nothing much, *mon ami*, but one can walk to it from here. And they ask no questions. Give them my name, just in case."



Aristide had heard of the dogfight on the road from Bar-sur-Aube, and the destruction of the ambulances. "*C'est la guerre*," he said, shrugging eloquent shoulders. "What can one say? A tragedy . . . another tragedy."

He spoke to them briefly only, not sitting down at their table, for he sensed much of Solange's mood. "That Horsy has given his word he will not send you out again into such danger. There are men to do such driving."

"Oh, but I must!" She was earnest. "Other girls . . . nurses . . . they risk their lives every day!"

He knew better than to contradict her. "It is true, *ma petite*. But he promised leave for you . . . for the picture. For my *Lysistrata*."

"Oh . . . Oh, yes," she said, for, strangely, she had forgotten. "When do we start shooting?"

"We wait for you," he said. "Is tomorrow too soon?"

"Oh, no," she said, but in a dream. "Tomorrow will be fine, if the Red Cross . . . ?"

"You are promised," said Aristide. "Then tomorrow we will make some tests."

She smiled, for the first time that evening. "I might have known there was a catch to it."

"Makeup tests . . . camera tests . . . that is all," he said, spreading his starfish hands. "I swear to you there is no possible catch, as you say. But we must make sure you are photographed perfectly, and all the rest. If all goes well, we'll do the indoor scenes here at the studio—in Paris—and then we'll finish in Villefranche, in the south . . . it will look like Greece and the Aegean."

"Oh—is that near Nice?"

"Yes . . . a sleepy little place on the Côte d'Azur. You'll like it. You'll get a sunburn."

She shook her head, smiling again. "No—I don't burn. I'm part Red Indian."

The little hotel was old and in need of paint, and the mattress was lumpy, but it did not matter; they loved each other very much. Afterward, Solange said, "I need a cigarette," sighing a little.

"You smoke too much," he whispered. "Did I tell you that before?"

"Yes, indeed," she said. "You have indeed . . . *ad nauseam*."

"Latin!" he cried, delightedly. "I had a lot of Latin at school."

"Really?" she said. "I didn't know you went to school."

"You're a devil," he said, happily, and, seeking cigarettes, switched

on the light, a naked bulb directly over the bed. It was unbelievably dim, even for a French hotel, but the bloodstains on the sheets were still quite plain to see. Sammy said, looking down at them, "I'm relieved it's the French who have to do this laundry."

"Samson!" she cried softly. "Samson, that's the first time I've ever heard you be funny!"

"Woman," he said sternly, "I'm a comedian!"

"That's different. You can't help that." And she kissed him lightly. "But a witty remark . . . why, that's a good omen—for our life."

That was when he asked to marry her, and got her odd and unexpected answer. "But truly," he said, "it's the way you spoke tonight. We ought to marry because—well, anything might happen over here."

"I know, Samson," she said. "I'll have to think about it. I'd like to make this picture first, too," she said, gravely. "I want to see if I'm any good. You know, I don't want to get parts just because I'm your wife." She stayed quietly in his arms for a while, then she said, again, "I want to wait. Let's wait."

"All right," he said. "But then I won't use anything." And he showed her the wadded-up contraceptive rolled into his handkerchief.

"God, no!" she cried, laughing. "I said it'll be like Russian roulette."

The tests for *Lysistrata* were good; in fact, one might almost see the stolen cat's cream upon the waxed ends of Aristide's mustache; he wore a secret smile all evening at the café.

"How did it go?" asked Sammy.

"Oh," said Aristide, waving his hand, "she will be very nice in the part."

The part Solange was cast for was not the lead; a famous actress, aging now but still striking, was on loan from the Comédie for *Lysistrata*; Solange would play Myrrhina, a young Athenian matron. It was an engaging role, innocently naughty, with one hilarious sexy scene, the high point of the play. Solange was worried. "I'm not so good in comedy," she said. "I'll probably get fired the first day."

Fired she was not; nevertheless, Aristide wore a glum look at La Chatte. "*Mon ami*," he said, in Sammy's ear, "something is wrong."

He asked Sammy to look at the rushes of the day's work. "She has the face of a Helen," he said. "But . . . well, you will see. Come to

the studio. Solange, too. I will run the scenes for you. Perhaps . . .” And he shook his head.

Sammy saw instantly what was the matter. “She is face-acting,” he said. At Aristide’s blank look, he went on. “Using her face too much . . . too much movement. Stage people often begin that way . . . overcompensating for the silence.” They ran the film again, stopping it at times, going back. Solange had a fabled beauty; the camera could find no flaw; from every angle her face was spellbinding. But her mouth curved, her eyes darted and rolled, expressions flitted in lightning flashes across the superb planes of her beautiful face. They spoke as if she were not there. “Yes, you are right,” said Aristide. “She looks—how do you say?—idiotic!”

“No, no,” Sammy protested. “Not really. Just—wrong. You will have to scrap this footage.”

“But of course.”

By this time Solange had buried her face in her hands as she sat beside them. “Don’t cry, darling,” said Sammy.

“I’m not crying!” she said, outraged. “I just can’t look at it! Oh, Christ, I was afraid it would be like this! I’m hopeless!”

“Oh, no,” Aristide began.

Sammy took her hands, dragging them down from her eyes. “You must look at it—to put it right! Everybody makes mistakes at first. It took me about a hundred pictures to get rid of *my* mistakes! I was lucky, though . . . in those days we were all in the same boat, all learning together. You’ll have to do it on your own . . . and right now!”

“I don’t know how!” she wailed.

“Look at it again!” They watched the brief scenes that flashed on the little cardboard testing screen.

“I see,” Solange said afterward. “I’m exaggerating everything. It’s all overdone.”

“It would be all right on the stage,” said Sammy. “Not good, but all right. It would pass. But the screen magnifies, you see. And stillness is very compelling. A still face . . . well, it’s a great secret to be learned. And very simple . . . but—” He struggled to express himself. “It’s not just stillness. That wouldn’t be acting. It’s . . . well, your thoughts have to show in your face. In your eyes, really. I remember Laverne—she was even worse than I was, when we were kids. She’d done so much vaudeville, you see. Mordecai helped us both . . . and now—well, now she doesn’t even look as if she’s acting, do you see?”

Solange certainly did; she thought Laverne looked perfectly blank. She hated being compared to her. But she bit her tongue and said only, "Yes—I think I understand."

And she did understand. Solange was very intelligent. And, as she had promised with her love-making, she learned quickly. The very next day her performance improved, as if by magic; Aristide had only to shake his head or raise a warning finger. Her quirked eyebrow straightened, her lovely mouth relaxed, her eyes began to speak for her. "You are going to be fantastic!" said Aristide.

The company left for the South of France. They were gone for a month, far beyond the leave Solange had been promised. "It's going to be a wonderful picture," said Horsy, who, of course, was in it, too. "It will make history!" So the Red Cross, as it were, winked at her absence. Sammy could not believe how much he missed her. He appeared night after night, in hospital wards, in music rooms, in the messhalls, at the Officers' Club, asking for the assignments, needing them. He became one of the great favorites of all Paris, spilling out his genius along with his loneliness, making his own bit of history.

Solange arrived back in Paris with a dark suntan that made her teeth look very white. "Like a Negro's," she said. "I like it." Sammy preferred her without it, but did not say so. He thought she looked theatrical, as if she were wearing body makeup. "It's so beautiful there," she said. "The sky and the sea are much bluer . . . and the light is white—I can't describe it, really. We must go there . . . on our honeymoon." His heart leaped. He started to say something, but she put her finger over his lips, smiling. "Later," she said. "We'll talk about it later."

That first night back in Paris, Aristide, beaming, played the whole film through, a private showing, at the Officers' Club. "It has not been edited, you understand," he said to Sammy. "It is still uncut."

Sammy did not understand; his own films had never been edited, and were played exactly as they had been shot, except, of course, where something had gone wrong and had had to be refilmed. "How do you edit them?" he asked.

"Why, we cut out parts that are repetitious, or too slow, or don't look good for some reason. And then we splice the two ends of film together. It's an art in itself. There is our genius, over there." And he pointed to a tiny little man, like a gnome, who was huddled over a great chart and making marks on it. "He will watch like a hawk, you see, and take notes as the picture runs. Then tomorrow he will play it over and over, stopping to cut and splice. Then we will run it to-



gether, he and I, and make some more decisions. And *voilà*—we will have a masterpiece!” He snapped his fingers. “Take down the lights now, someone!” He turned to face the viewers, composed mainly of the cast and some few others. Must be camera people, thought Sammy, or technicians. “Get settled in, everyone!” called Aristide. “It will run long.”

He was so very right. The picture, uncut, ran nearly four hours; Sammy timed it, stretching his cramped legs. It was quite wonderful, though, he thought. He could not see where it needed cutting. Except of course it did. No audience would sit for four hours! “Every foot of it was perfect,” he said to Aristide. “It will be hard to cut anything out.”

“Oh, never fear! Our genius has made hundreds of notes. I can see them from here. There is always room for improvement. My *Faust* ran for more than ten hours. We cut it to two.”

Sammy felt quite shy of Solange; she was so very good. “You’re going to be a star, darling,” he said. “There’s nobody like you in pictures.” It was a dim kind of compliment, but he could think of nothing else to say; admiration made him speechless.

“Thank you, Samson. I can see that I am doing better now. I owe it to you. There are still some rough spots, but—”

Aristide cut in. “Cuts will take care of them,” he said. “You’re going to be a sensation!”

*Lysistrata* was, even in its sprawling, uncut profusion, a good picture, far more adult than anything yet produced in the United States. The actors had been directed to play together; there was a smoothness in all the scenes, a cohesion; it went well, and held the interest, even for four hours. No one looked bad, though the leading woman showed her age; she made up for it by the brilliance of her technique and the stunning presence molded by years of stardom on the French stage, but it was the raw young Solange that one remembered. Now and then, in the long shots, the grace of her body was marred by an incredible piece of gaucherie, but her face could not be faulted. Difficult to describe, masklike but elastic, it electrified the screen, looking like a painting by a great master, rendered in black and white. Her red hair photographed as very dark, her eyes long, dark, and shadowed, and her full mouth like a black flower, against a white, almost pearly skin. Not conforming to the classical ideal of beauty, the face somehow generated its own classicism; it was startlingly, breathtakingly *new*.

She appeared throughout the picture, briefly, subordinate to the

star, with little to do but look lovely. But near the end she had one superb scene, easily the best scene in the picture, played with her young husband, back from the wars. Lysistrata had adjured all the Athenian women to withhold their wifely favors, thus to bring an end to the war. This scene showed the young Myrrhina attempting to do just that. Each advance from her husband was interrupted by some forgotten duty. "I must draw the curtains . . . I must puff up the pillow . . . I must close the door . . . I must let down my hair, brush my teeth, undo my girdle," and so on building to a hilarious climax. The young man who played opposite her had the perfect, rather bovine good looks of a Roman statue, and had been directed to play as though he were a bit slow-witted. The result was quite unbearably funny. Aristide had managed to get both players to be extremely serious in the scene, which of course made it all much funnier; it was the high spot of the film. Sammy said so, afterward, and Solange, grimacing a little, answered, "Oh, I'm so glad! I had such a time with it! I kept thinking it was funny, and showing it, I guess. And poor Aristide was so patient . . . we must have done it fifty times!"

"Yes," said Sammy, gravely. "It's the secret of comedy, I suppose. To never show that you think it's funny."

"Well," said Solange, laughing, "whatever the secret is, you have it, that's for sure."

Later, in the shabby little rented hotel room again, he whispered, "Did you mean it—about the honeymoon?"

"Yes," she said, slowly. "I think so. I haven't seen a doctor yet . . . but I'm late. With my period. Almost two weeks. So . . ."

Sammy was startled. He had not really taken her seriously about the baby. "You mean—you think—"

"I'm pregnant, yes. I'm pretty sure. So I'll marry you." She shot him a strange look. "That is, if you believe it's yours."

"My God, how can you talk like that? Of course I believe it's mine! Why did you say that?"

"Well . . . I know how jealous you are." She looked into his eyes. "And I've been away a whole month . . . with all those good-looking actors."

"Oh, actors," he said. "I wouldn't be jealous of actors."

She smiled. "Samson," she said. "You're funny even when you don't want to be."

## Chapter 16

Solange lay in the white hospital bed, the mound of her stomach rising like a long, low, prehistoric grave barrow in her sight. "Grave barrow, why do I think of that?" She sighed, listening to the sound of the guns. They seemed so much nearer now, or was that because it was so very quiet here, in the American Hospital? They seemed, the guns, only a street away; yet she knew there were fifty miles, at least, between the cannon and Paris. The dull, insistent roar seemed to come from her head; the shrapnel cut, months old now, on her forehead, throbbed. She sighed again, trying not to move, as the doctor had told her. The guns had gone on so long now, since the summer, and it was November already, the baby nearly due. The war, too, had gone on forever, even after the great victory in the Marne, the sacrifices and agonies of Belleau Wood, the news that the Germans had surrendered. They fought on; why wouldn't they stop? Everyone knew they were beaten. Why wouldn't they stop, so we could all go home? A tear rolled down her cheek, past her ear, tickling; she brushed it away, weakly. Where was Samson, when she needed him?

The pregnancy, too, like the war, had gone on so long. After the false start. Her lip twitched a little; she was too weak to smile, even at the remembered sight of Samson's face, thunderstruck, white with it, as she came out of the water at Villefranche, her new yellow one-piece bathing suit dyed bright with a great gush of menstrual blood. "Oh, God!" she had cried, careless of the curious French bathers who had turned at the sound of the foreign voice. "Oh, God, Samson . . . here I am, tied to you . . . and nothing to show for it!"

He had disregarded her wild protests—"It's just the curse," she had said, over and over, "I'm just late, that's all"—he had wrapped her in his bathrobe and carried her up the rickety wooden stairs of the sun-washed pension, calling for the chambermaid.

". . . It's a miscarriage!" he said, to the chambermaid and mimed a baby, cradled in his arms. "*Mon Dieu!*" cried the chambermaid, understanding instantly. "*Mon Dieu . . . le docteur!*" And rushed from the room.

Samson had been equal to the task of explaining to the village

doctor, too, who had no English. She, Solange, with her four long years of school French, could make no sense of the chambermaid's or the *concierge's* rapid patter, nor of the doctor's slow, measured Provençal, when he came. But Samson, in broken speech, with gestures, managed to explain, and even to get instructions. "Thank you, Samson," she had whispered, afterward. "I'm sorry I'm sick."

For it had been their honeymoon, a hurried thing, a week only, at Christmas, and most of it taken up with driving there and back. Christmas in the sun, it was to have been, all blue and golden; in Paris a few sluggish flakes of snow had been falling as they drove out to the south.

And now, in hospital again, this time awaiting childbirth, it was all of it, the whole year, like a series of still pictures in her head. Their wedding, under the crossed swords of the officers, British, French, and Yank, as well; swords from their dress uniforms that she had not known they had, so bright with brass and gold. The actors from the Comédie, the giggling, weeping Red Cross girls, the Salvation Army band, the starched white nurses from this very hospital, the nuns from Sacré Coeur, all crowded into the Officers' Mess. Horsy, reading the marriage service in his flat Midwestern voice; they had forgotten he was a chaplain! Elsie, grinning her boy's grin, looking like a boy between her two new boys from the Fourth Arrondissement. Aristide, resplendent in navy velvet and white silk poet shirt, giving the bride away. Sammy, in his khaki, and a haircut. She, in uniform, too, with a great bunch of Christmas evergreens for a bridal bouquet. They had drunk champagne, she remembered, from La Chatte's cellar horde, and had driven away, giddy with it, in the big ambulance, a loan from Horsy.

She saw, too, the hairpin curves of the Grande Corniche, feeling again her arms aching from the great, shuddering, heavy wheel, and the cramp of her ankle from braking on the way down. The splendor, too, of the view, like something thrown up by giants long ago: white, jagged rock, dense green far below, a hurting blue above, and, now and then, the sudden breathtaking glimpses of Homer's wine-dark sea. Though it was not his, there on the coast of France, she knew, but Caesar's maybe. Purple-dark it was as the songs promised, and black in the rock's shadow.

Then the open stretch, curving into sight, glorious; two dazzling blues that met on the horizon, in a blinding white light; the Côte d'Azur.

So much more beautiful it was, then, with just the two of them;



no cameras, no actors, no curious villagers staring. And all cut short by her weakness. She was ashamed of it; she had never been sick. Ashamed of having to lie here now, immobile, when there were so many really sick and needing the bed. If only she did not lose the baby! She willed herself to calmness, and to remembering. How did it go, the year? Paris again, in the bitter cold, and the war worsening, more and more troops from home, thousands of them, crowding the city. Young faces, so young; young, eager eyes gazing star-struck at the wonders of Paris; a new song, "How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm . . . after they've seen Paree?"

She drove again, drove the huge ambulances, though in a limited way, and never far outside the city; sometimes, in the evening, she was pressed into service as Sammy's pianist; it seemed she had the knack of it, that clever, shallow, maudlin accompaniment to this new mime art. Sometimes, too, she sang, with her banjo, to the soldier audiences; Sammy had found one for her in a pawnshop on the Left Bank; it was said you might find anything at all in a Paris pawnshop!

And then she was pregnant again, at the end of February, begging sick leave till she was sure; the doctor this time an army man, who put her to bed for safety. "You're as strong as a horse," he said. "It'll be a fine baby." Strong as a horse . . . why did they say that? The poor horses of Paris looked as though they would not last the night. But she smiled to herself, grimly, for she *had* been strong. She had come through a barrage of shelling, holding to the road and not swerving even when the alternate driver beside her took a direct hit, his blood and brains exploding into her lap. That was where she had got the shrapnel scar that slashed across her forehead under her hair. It was just after the release of *Lysistrata*; she had been hailed as a new star; a face to "launch a thousand ships and burn the topless towers of Ilium," misquoted the boldest of the critics. A scar had been hard to take, harder perhaps than anything else—than death and maiming, than nightmare and trauma, even than fear for the baby. "Am I so vain?" She was, she told herself firmly, and came to terms with it once and for all, soon after the scar appeared. She raised her hand to smooth the long fringe of hair she had cut to hide it.

Horsy had cried when they brought her in, her face all covered in blood; he blamed himself for sending her out, though he could not have known—there had never been an attack so near the city. Touched, she had said, "Never mind, Horsy"—forgetting, for once, to suppress the nickname—"never mind . . . it looks worse than it is. It doesn't hurt at all."

Sammy wept that he had not been the one to be wounded; surely he knew no blame attached to him for not being sent to the front! "Thank God you haven't been!" she had whispered fiercely. "You don't know what it's like there . . . none of us know. But I've heard the wounded . . . the whole back of the ambulance moans of nightmare. . . ." Sammy had shaken his head, wiped his eyes, and held her hand while they stitched up the long, jagged cut. Afterward, when she slept, sedated, in the emergency room, he had gone to La Chatte and got blind drunk.

And now here she was, waiting. The baby was due, even overdue; where was Samson? She was dying for a cigarette, even a filthy Gaulois; she had smoked the last in her packet that morning after the weak hospital coffee. Dared she ring for a nurse? Oh, no; they were so busy, with the epidemic. The hospital was filled to overflowing, not with wounded, but with the victims of an influenza said to have come from Asia, though how it had got here was not explained. There were cases all over Europe, in the thousands, and even more in the United States; a great many people had died of it. It was highly contagious, of a respiratory nature, with high fever, and here in the hospital they had isolated all the flu cases, hoping to contain it. The few wounded were here on this floor, in the ward, and she was alone in this makeshift privacy which had once been a laundry room. Still was, she thought, smiling weakly; a bucket and a dried-out mop stood in the corner and a wicker hamper bulged with linen; there was a strong smell of disinfectant.

The long bulge of her stomach moved, a kind of ripple, disquieting. It did not hurt, but reminded her that she needed to urinate. She reached down carefully to where the bedpan hid, under the bed; it was almost full; surely that would be a good excuse to ring for a nurse? She rang. She could not wait, though, and, measuring hopefully, used it. It was awkward; with her unaccustomed bulk, everything was awkward; slipping it out from under herself, she spilled a little, and pressed the bell again, harder. "They probably can't hear, anyway," she thought, "for the shelling"; as she thought this, the shelling stopped; the silence was like thunder. It went on and on, hurting her ears. No sound broke it, but suddenly a fearful pain, like a knife thrust, went through her side, and then another.

"Is this it?" she thought. "Is this the baby?" It was not as they described it, not at all. She began to be frightened, and rang again. A wet warmth poured around her hips and under her legs, like a heated bath. "But I've just used the bedpan. What is it?" It was still

coming, a flood, and with it slow, somnolent crampings, low in her belly. She rang, frantically. The bell sounded through the walls and ceilings, raucous in the silence, urgent. She heard footsteps in the corridor, swift.

The nurse looked untidy, frightened, her cap a little askew, a wisp of soft, fair hair escaping from it at the back. "The bell's too loud. Did you want something?" She looked where Solange gestured; immediately the untidy aspect left her; she whipped the sheet from under and replaced it, mopping and kneading, drying Solange's legs and back. "Just happened, did it? Be a dry birth. . . . Any pain?"

"Y-yes . . ." and then she was racked again, holding her breath while it lasted. "Another one," she said, smiling tremulously, feeling somehow apologetic.

"How far apart?" The nurse looked at her expectantly.

"Oh . . . five minutes . . . ten. . . ."

"You'll have to time them." And the nurse handed her a great nickel-colored watch, its tick loud in the quiet.

"The shelling's stopped," said Solange.

The nurse looked surprised. "So it has. I knew something felt different. . . . Back in a moment." And she bundled up the wet sheets and hurried through the door.

"Do you think it's over? The war . . . is it over?" But the nurse had vanished. Solange lay rigid, dry now and warm, with a blanket over her stomach. "Is it over, then?" Her thoughts, even, were loud in that profound silence. Another pain, like a savage fist closing; she clamped her lips shut against a groan; sweat sprang out on her forehead; she dug her nails into her palms. The pain let go, reluctantly; she groaned softly, protestingly. "Oh, my God, I forgot to time it!" she said aloud, staring at the watch hands helplessly. "Five minutes? Yes—five minutes. I'll say five minutes." Another pain came, harder this time, taking her breath. When it was over, she said to herself, "Is this all? I can stand this. But that one came too quickly to time. Start now." She looked down, self-obedient, to the watch. The hands blurred. This time she groaned aloud; the pain was fierce, punishing; she could not believe it was meant for her.

Afterward she rang again, holding her hand against the bell, listening to it clamor down the corridor, not caring, wanting help. The nurse ran in. "What . . . ?"

Solange shook her head. "There's no timing them. They're coming all together—" She clutched her belly, feeling her face twist into a

knot; her back arched. It was over, finally; she let out her breath on a moan.

"Yell if you want," said the nurse, peering between her legs, spreading them gently. "Don't see anything yet. Be awhile. . . ."

The nurse busied herself, little tasks Solange could not take in, housewifely tasks. Solange said, after a bit, "There hasn't been a pain. What's happened?"

"Don't worry," said the nurse, smiling. "There'll be one. You won't get off that easy. You'll have to try and time them," she finished, sternly. "They'll be coming regular now. Just keep your eye on the watch."

"Oh!" gasped Solange. "Here comes one!" She screwed her eyes shut, did not yell; it was over, grindingly. "That was seven minutes since the other," she said, triumphantly.

"Good girl," said the nurse, briskly. "I'll be back."

"The doctor . . ." said Solange weakly.

"I'll let one of them know. It's not time yet." And the nurse disappeared again.

The pains came, faster and harder, impossibly harder. Solange timed them, holding on to the watch as if it were her sanity; it helped. The nurse came in and out, several times; Solange did not know if it was the same one. The pains came one minute apart; surely they would split her in two. She howled, hearing the sound she made, wondering what animal was hurt in the street below; the silence was full of nightmare noises; the bright sunlight was red. She howled without stopping; the room grew black as night. Dimly she heard feet, movement, felt hands; something wet was pushed onto her face, covering her nose and mouth; she struggled against it briefly, and knew no more.

She woke to a brightness, dazzling; her body felt as if she had been beaten all over with heavy stones; somewhere was a thin crying. A tiny face hung above her, red, wrinkled; cloudy blue eyes looked out of it, right at her. "Your son," said a man's voice.

They always said a baby's eyes did not open, did not focus, but this one stared; her son, their son! She held out her arms.

"No, no . . . have to wash him . . . he's had a hard time, poor little bugger." It was the nurse's voice. The room began to take shape now, and she saw a man in a white coat; the doctor, smiling, the front of his coat bloody.

"How do you feel?"

"Fine."



"Got a name for the baby?"

Joseph, she thought, for Sammy's father, that was what they had decided; she opened her mouth to say it. Suddenly a wildness of noise broke outside the window; whistles, bells, shouting, a noise that drowned out everything; had she spoken? Doctor and nurse left her and were at the window, throwing up the sash, leaning out; she saw them, finding she could turn her head. "What is it?" She knew they could not hear her. She tried to rise, but her legs, her arms, her whole body was heavy as lead or concrete, and unutterably weak; she could not move. "What is it?"

"The Armistice! The Armistice is signed! The war is over!" The nurse leaned close over her, speaking into her ear.

"Here," said the nurse. "Here is your little boy, all cleaned up." Solange saw that her face was smeared with tears. "Thank God it's over! It's over. *He* won't have to fight!" She put the tiny bundle into Solange's arms.

Solange held her baby, looking down in awe at the tiny, crumpled scrap of a face. "You brought peace," she said silently, wonderingly. "Joseph Peace Savage . . . that's your name," she said aloud. "Joseph Peace Savage. . . ."

## Chapter 17

Little Joseph Peace, called J.P., was the first Savage to be brought up in unbridled luxury. He had a nurse *and* a nanny, an entire wing of a French château in Beverly Hills for a nursery, and a whole set of silver spoons. For his fifth birthday he got a pony and cart and a small sailboat; at eight he had a larger sailboat, his own thoroughbred mount, his very own checkbook. He was not spoiled by having these things, for did not everyone?

In the years after the First World War, money flowed; one might almost say it overflowed. And nowhere was sudden wealth more evident than in the still novel motion-picture industry, settled now firmly in the suburb of Hollywood. Everyone connected with pictures was rich, or appeared to be; a kind of game prevailed, a set of rules; it was as though the money must flow or perhaps—who knew?—it

might be lost, or at the very least shown up as counterfeit. The acting population, those myriad stars, great and small, of the silent screen, spent frantically, almost maniacally, to the extent of their huge earnings: houses, cars, clothes, jewels. They vied with one another like children, buying every larger dwellings, ever more expensive clothes, ever more fabled gems. At the same time, like more vulnerable children, they absolved themselves by these purchases; it was as though they said to their fans, "Look what I'm doing with your money! Look how pretty, how harmless!" For such sudden stardom exposed many insecurities; they swaggered, they protested, they drank too much, they developed fashionable neuroses. They were a microcosm, in fact, of the times, of the twenties.

J.P.'s parents were among the biggest stars of that day; his father, Sammy Savage, was, next to Chaplin, the most beloved of the great funny men; hardly a laundry, a cleaning establishment, a carpet-sweeper, broom, or gritty cleanser, did not bear the name Spotless Sam; it was before the days of royalties on such things, and Sammy had to make do with his picture earnings. Solange, his mother, billed, Frenchly, as Solange Sauvage, was, from her first picture, hailed as one of the screen's greatest beauties. She was of that exotic style called "vamp," and was much imitated across the country. One might see the famous Solange bob in a New Jersey nightclub, or in a high school in Iowa; her fans did not dream it was an invention of her own to hide a shrapnel scar on her forehead, and covered their own white, flawless brows with that thick Solange fringe, lengthening their eyes beneath with smudges of eye-shadow for the elusive Solange look.

Solange had been the first moving-picture actress to bob her hair, of necessity, as it were; she had copied the hair-do from an old print of Joan of Arc, a romanticized page-boy cut, soft and full, squared off at brow and nape, vastly becoming even to her imitators. She it was, also, who had worn the first knee-length, waistless dress in films, though the young designer Coco Chanel had brought this style out in Paris several years earlier. Solange films were clothes-horse films; she played the "new woman," vivid, reckless, burning the candle at both ends, smoking like a chimney, drinking like a fish, throwing her life away on love or a whim, mirroring the spirit of the post-war age. Iris March of *The Green Hat* had not yet been written, or Lady Brett of *The Sun Also Rises*, but Solange played them, over and over; brilliant, cynical, worldly, and depraved, her screen image served as a model for the sophisticated life style. Solange had another, "inner"

following, too; intellectuals, the new "Bohemians," poets, artists, and homosexuals all loved her jealously, feeling she brought a particular message for them alone. It was not known where this feeling originated; perhaps some of them had seen the French *Lysistrata* or the first picture she made in America under Aristide's direction, a version of *Carmen*. But more than likely it was something in Solange herself, some special rarefied quality; Alla Nazimova, too, was a favorite of the avant-garde, and the young Greta Garbo as well.

J.P. had seen all of his father's pictures, even the old two-reelers, though Sammy made feature-length films now exclusively; at eight J.P. could do a fair imitation, in white pajamas and a powdered face. He had seen a few of his mother's films as well; he did not care for them; they were soppy, and she was always kissing somebody while the audiences made rude sucking noises or stamped their feet. He knew she was tremendously popular, even more so than his father; she could no longer answer her fan mail, and had to employ two girls to deal with it. Her face stared out from the cover of film magazines; at least once a week there was a new one, with a new pose; the pages inside were filled with her pictures, too, and pictures of their house, their swimming-pool, even of him, J.P. He soon learned to shrug it off; besides, so many of his small friends had movie-star mothers, too. At least his mother was as beautiful as her pictures; some of them were not. One lady had hair like burnt yellow straw, and another had freckles all over her face when it was not covered by makeup. Solange looked just the same in life, except that her hair was red, like his.

He knew how he had come by his middle name; he had heard the story of the Armistice often enough; he had heard, too, darkly, with his mother's eyes accusing over the rim of her cocktail glass, how his father had not shown up there in the American Hospital in Paris, where he had been born. Had not shown up through all the ordeal (what was it?) that had gone on so long; had not shown up when the bells were ringing for peace, or even when his mother had named him, thankfully. Had not shown up, and not shown up, and not shown up. Until the next morning . . . and then dead drunk from whiskey (which they were both still drinking, bewilderingly). And he had not got drunk, his father, to celebrate the birth of Joseph Peace, or even the cessation of war, like everybody else in Paris, but to mourn the passing of an old leading lady, Laverne Kelly, which news was not even on the front page, because of the Armistice. It was all too bewildering, and a little ugly, too. J.P. hated it when his mother's

eyes, so beautiful and gentle, got that hot, black look. Then she looked as she looked in her movies, cross and wild. J.P. had looked for the dead lady in his father's old two-reelers; she was there—Lady Laverne, she was called; so strange to see her all alive and young, sweet-faced, dressed in old-time clothes.

For Laverne had been one of the flu's more famous victims, leaving a month-old daughter, Winifred. All of it was true: Sammy's dreadful negligence and more dreadful loyalty. Solange was never to forget it, though she swore that she forgave.

They had made it up then, of course, for Solange loved her Sammy; besides, she was not in the habit of feeling sorry for herself. She had done her job; she had held on to her baby, and given birth to it, and it—or, rather, he—was beautiful and healthy; and besides, what could Sammy have done by making an appearance? And was not everyone drunk with happiness on that wonderful day, the end of the war? Then, when it happened, she had pushed down the other feeling, the feeling of resentment that he should so mourn for Laverne; in a strange way, it seemed to come under the same onus as speaking ill of the dead. She pretended, even to herself, that she sympathized; it was not until years later, and in her cups, that she let it surface.

They sailed back to America, Sammy, Solange, and little Joseph Peace swaddled like a minuscule mummy against the Atlantic chill, for it was winter. Aristide stood at the rail beside them as the boat docked, for the photographers; he, too, was under a big new contract. He and his protégée Solange had been signed by Mendelssohn Wax Productions, he to a contract giving him almost unlimited control as producer-director, and she to one of the highest salaries ever offered a newcomer. Sammy, for his part, would be going back to a full partnership in Monarch-Miller Pictures; the deal had been in the works before Sammy had been called up, but there had been no time to conclude it; now Mordecai had confirmed it in writing. Sammy, who could never be truly happy about anything, was a little miffed, though he could not say why, at Solange's contract; he told her he would have liked her to sign with Monarch-Miller.

"But—the offer was not nearly so good," she said, astounded. "There was to be no billing—and the salary was tiny! Besides, Samson, you know I said from the beginning that I wanted to do this all on my own . . . not because I'm your wife! You *are* Monarch!"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," said Sammy. But she saw that he was mollified, and listened sympathetically as he went on. "I just want



you to have the best, you see . . . and, well, Mendy Wax doesn't know anything about theater, about acting!"

"Oh, but Aristide does, you see. And he's hired Aristide!"

He had indeed hired Aristide; Mendy Wax had hired every fine artist of the film world, even a producer out of the still unpopular German industry. He had combed the stock companies, the road shows, Broadway, London's West End, and the two great French theaters, the Odéon and the Comédie, for talent; he had already a roster of stars that read like a theatrical *Who's Who*. If Mendy had a genius, it was for recognizing genius. Sometimes, as Aristide said, that was worth a great deal more.

Aristide's pictures, even the first *Carmen* with Solange, did not make money; "They are too good," said Mendy, and renewed his contract at a higher figure. It was a wise move; indeed, it seemed Mendy could not make an unwise one, professionally. Mendelssohn Wax Productions, no matter how tasteless, no matter how vulgar a picture, carried always the aura of Art with a capital A. Could a company that had people like the great Aristide Le Gros on its list ever make a really bad picture? And the enormous monetary successes easily carried the artistic failures; Mendy had it both ways.

Solange was an instantaneous hit; the *Carmen*, though a critical success, did nothing for her, and indeed, was released only in the big cities, but her second, *Dark Passions*, established her "vamp" image, and the third one, *The Idle Rich*, made her a star. They were trumpy tales, all those first successes of Solange, but they had a certain style and verve, a chic that was new to the screen and unmistakably Solange. She was not called upon to act, though Mordecai pronounced, judicially, that she was loaded with talent; she undulated, insinuated, smoldered, and lured. Over the silent years her image changed slightly, as she fought for better parts and got them, but she was always, in a good story or a poor one, a siren.

J.P. did not know his mother was a siren, a vamp; he did not even know the words, for he did not read movie magazines. Except when she argued with Daddy, Mother was just Mother, kind and gentle, understanding and wise. For Solange took motherhood seriously; the nanny and the nurse were only stopgaps, to take over when Solange was at the studio. She rose even earlier than the customary start of shooting and took breakfast with her son; she came straight home when the day's filming was over to see that he ate his supper, to play with him, read him stories, and tuck him into his bed. Whereupon, as like as not, she soon followed his example, for she was exhausted.

There were no wild parties for Solange, in those days of J.P.'s babyhood; there was no cocktail hour, barely an evening; Sammy drank alone. For Sammy, like most alcoholics when they begin, had a formidable, a frightening energy. He could work all day and drink all night, get up in the morning and do it all over again.

Sammy was a good father, too, in those early days; he taught J.P. to ride, to sail, to bicycle, to play games, all the things that he himself had come to late. A little later, he taught him to do a buck-and-wing, a time step, a double-take; he showed him how to "take a fall," feint a blow, and go with a punch, all the tricks of the comedian's trade. J.P. practiced them faithfully and remembered them for years, though quite early he decided not to be a comedian. In his deepest, farthest memories, however, J.P. heard still his mother's thrilling, dark voice, with its sweet suggestion of huskiness, saw still her long finger, crimson-nailed, pointing to a picture in a book or a glorious sunset, and, way, way back, felt still the soft warmth of her arms, a gentle rocking, and the faint rhythm of a crooning, tuneless song.

He had other teachers, too, the best; he had his dancing lessons from a world-renowned artist of the ballet, his piano and violin lessons from a master, his elocution from the great Mordecai Miller.

Mordecai, by now, was truly the ancient he had years ago seemed to be, though he looked very much the same. "I'm indestructible!" he was fond of saying. He was now considered, such talents as Aristide Le Gros notwithstanding, to be the greatest director in pictures; "I got my foot in the door first," he would say, slyly. All Hollywood went in awe of him, and a "recital" of the Bard by Mordecai was the high spot of any party; he wore his toga still and gave the same repertoire exactly as that day long ago on the eve of the earthquake; Sammy swore that he was better than ever, but Mabel, for her part, could not listen, for it made her weep.

Mabel no longer, of course, lived in Mordecai's house; she had moved into her daughter's home when Laverne became Mrs. Mendelssohn Wax, and now, after Laverne's demise, stayed on to bring up the little Winifred and to keep house for her son-in-law. Mendy, with a certain delicacy, insisted that she keep on with her career as casting director for Monarch-Miller, his rival; he might have lured her over to his own company with a bigger offer and the claims of kinship, but he did not; as Mabel said, "Mr. Wax is too fine for that! He's a gentleman!"

In an odd way, they all lived in one another's pockets, as it were, for their enormous, costly houses were side by side upon the first

great swell of Beverly Hills; all the property stretched behind, to the hills themselves, and there was very little frontage. Mordecai's vaguely Colonial mansion, Mendy's sprawling Spanish hacienda, and the Savages' French-Norman château stood together, high above the city streets, looking for all the world like three movie sets. None of the three cared to be the first to build a fence or grow a hedge; gardeners exchanged stories and seedlings, cooks borrowed and lent sugar and gossip, and the two children, nearly the same age, ran freely about the whole complex, at home everywhere.

Winifred Wax was J.P.'s best friend, though she was a girl. No boy could climb higher, run faster, or, for that matter, hit harder; Winifred was tops. Though J.P. was a pleasant combination of his two attractive parents, Winifred seemed to have nothing of either Laverne or Mendy. Dark, dark, dark as she was, she might have been a throwback to some dim desert ancestor of her father's. She looked like those large-eyed waifs glimpsed in news photos from Turkey or Asia Minor, skinny, long-nosed, short-chinned, alien. She was a clever child, even brilliant, from her earliest days reading everything she could get her hands on, even her father's thick German tomes, poring over them with a German-English dictionary. To his delight, she turned out to be musically gifted; she adored her elegant, gently sardonic father, and sat for hours of her child's day at the great piano, practicing, for a word of praise. He was very busy, Mendy, and she did not see him often; sometimes business took him away for weeks and even months. But when they did meet, he treated her with an odd Old World courtesy, as if she were grownup, discussing Mozart and Bach with her, and giving her sparkling wines in long-stemmed glasses. He never seemed to notice her scabby knees, torn frocks, or her awful hair, which went to little black wires immediately when the wind ruffled it.

Mabel despaired of Winifred; even she saw at once that this was no child to be sashed and ruffled; it was difficult enough to keep her reasonably clean! Nor did she perform properly at the piano, but hunched over it like a gnome, frowning, sometimes pouncing at the notes as if they were trying to escape, sometimes skimming them as delicately as the wing of a butterfly. Mabel recognized her talent, of course: prodigious, but what could one do with it, how show it off? What, indeed, could one do with Winifred? And so Mabel, thwarted, fed her rare steaks and cod-liver oil to build her up, and hot Ovaltine to calm her nerves. For, God knew, the child was skin and bones, as lively as a monkey, and into everything.

"She will shape up . . . she will shape up," said Mordecai, cupping Winifred's little chin and tilting it upward to examine her closely. "She looks like Bernhardt."

"I read about her," said the little monkey. "She slept in a coffin!"

"And was a very great actress," said Mordecai, chidingly. "Perhaps not—in my opinion—as great as Duse. But still . . . a very great artist." He got out copies of Shakespeare and handed them to the two children. "You will do well, little lady, to model yourself on her, since you have this fortuitous resemblance."

"But I don't want to be an actress," said Winifred, though she took the book from him.

"Then why do I waste my time on you, miss?" he inquired, in his frostiest manner.

"Oh, it won't be wasted," she said quickly. "I like the words. That's what I'm going to be, a writer. Like Shakespeare."

The two children attended a sort of old-fashioned "dame school" run by two retired lesbian teachers from Smith College; it was frightfully expensive, geared to the enormous Hollywood salaries, for the students were children of stars and producers. They studied grammar and arithmetic, spelling and a smitch of history; the atmosphere was permissive, the very latest craze in education, though the school was called, rather preciously, *The House of the Three R's*. There was a great deal of folk dancing, bird-watching, pot-making, and finger-painting; still, to do the elderly misses credit, they did instill into their spoiled, rich infants a rudimentary knowledge of the three R's of the school's name; at any rate, most of those same rich infants went on to fancy schools in the East and were not turned down. Winifred, of course, from her prodigious reading, was miles ahead of the oldest class; they could teach her nothing, so, wisely, they found new books for her and encouraged her to write. In her six years at the little school, Winifred wrote eight novels, each running well over six hundred pages, sixteen plays, and enough poems, short stories, and essays to fill a good-sized closet.

Winifred was a born leader, as they say; she led the way in all things, with all children—the pretty little snobs from school, prattling and simpering, or the cook-and-gardener children, cheeky Irish or quick, boneless blacks. She led J.P. as thoroughly as if he were a little pony. He loved it; he loved Winnie, as surely and as loyally as once his father had loved the lost Laverne.

It was Winnie who organized the games played in dusty, long days hot with sun, dappled with faintly stirring leaves, the Tarzan days,



with tree house and rope swings; Winnie, at age eight, broke her arm first, importantly, in two places, with the white bone showing through, and a cast for weeks; J.P. followed, cracking his wrist, painfully, a hairline fracture bound only with tape. It was Winnie who found the caves, left by an abandoned bulldozer on a plot, abandoned too; they spent hours crawling through the yellow clayey ruins, digging for ancient Troy or the Missing Link; once they found a little cache of old, brittle bones wrapped in shreds of yellowing newsprint, the grisly bits of a murder victim; J.P., knowing the bones for a chicken's, still shuddered pleasantly, listening to Winnie's spun tale of hidden horrors.

The games at twilight were the best, though; fireflies winked mysteriously, trapped and glowing in Mason jars; shrill child voices rose on the cooling air . . . "One two three—Red Light!" Or Statues, the best—Winnie swinging always, round and round, with skinny strength, till one flew from her brown grasp to freeze—perhaps forever!—in wonderful, thrilling attitudes. "Be noble!" she would command. "Be tragic!" "Be triumphant!" And J.P. would strike a stony pose in his flung attitude, face frozen in a taut grimace, limbs stiff, holding his breath, for all the world like one of his own thespian ancestors posing for portrait or daguerreotype long ago. "J.P.'s best!" Winnie would announce, even when no one else was playing; it was their own convention.

And when it grew darker still, just before time to go to bed, Winnie, from her abundant fund of literature, would tell stories, harrowing, haunting, terrifying. "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Body-Snatchers." Some of her own, too—worse, deliciously horrible. "Walk me home, Winnie!" "No," she would say, shaking her black curls, "No . . . you asked for it. Go alone! Look, there's a light . . . it's just across the lawn . . . run!" and J.P., shamed, would run toward the light, across the black lawn, under the risen cold moon; run for his life, panting, with the hounds of Hell around him and Winnie's laughter mocking him from the dark night behind.

It was Winnie, as well, who led J.P. into difficulties with the authorities of his childish world; there was nothing funny about Winnie, as comics go, but J.P. could not resist laughing at her antics in the schoolroom, behind the teacher's back. He it was who was denied the bird-watching field trip, or the kiln-drying, or the painting in oils; the punishments were mild, but everything is relative, and

J.P. knew it was unfair. Still, he never told, never accused Winnie; perhaps he knew she would merely have shrugged.

Once, when they were very young indeed, before Winnie had progressed to psychology books, J.P. overheard a fascinating bit of conversation at home. Breathless and important, he arrived at Winnie's house one afternoon. "You know what?" he asked, and answered himself quickly. "Two fairies are coming to our house for dinner! Mama said so. She said it right out. 'Let's ask those two fairies tonight . . . I don't think they have many friends in Hollywood.' That's what she said! And they're coming right now!"

"But you're not eating with them?" Winnie was a practical child and knew the grownup world.

"No . . . it'll be late. I'm supposed to eat with you and sleep over. It's all right, isn't it?"

"Oh, of course, silly . . . but we have to get back in your house. We have to *see* them!"

"There's that little balcony over the porte-cochère. We could sneak onto that, and then we'd see them as they drove up . . . Oh!" His eyes widened. "Would they *drive*, you think? Or—"

"Sure they'd drive," said Winnie, scornfully. "They wouldn't *fly* right out in front of everybody!"

"I guess you're right," said J.P., disappointed.

But their vigil on the balcony was unproductive; only one car drove up, a Packard coupé out of which two quite ordinary young men emerged, one carrying a bouquet of roses. The two children waited, cramped into the small space above the porte-cochère—no more than an architect's conceit, really, a tiny cubbyhole with a round window like a porthole, through which they peered uncomfortably, steaming the glass.

"We must have been here an hour at least," complained Winnie, "and no one's come at all but that Packard. You must have heard it wrong . . . or did you make it up?"

"Oh, no, Winnie. Cross my heart 'n' hope to die."

"Oh, all right, if that's what she said . . . your mother. But I'm getting a crick in my neck. They're awfully late."

"I don't think they *are* coming in a car. I think . . . well, you know. They wouldn't *have* to drive!"

Winnie's expression was lost, for the cubbyhole was dark, but J.P. could hear her small snort, infuriating. "Maybe," he said, desperately, "maybe they came early—before we got up here. They've already gone into the dining-room, I heard them crossing the

hall. . . ." For the expensive château was jerry-built. "Maybe they're down there right now!"

"Let's go down and see!"

"Oh, I couldn't do that! Mama wouldn't like it. I'm supposed to be at your house . . . and Daddy might get angry."

Winnie was silent; even she knew that Sammy *did* get angry, especially when he had too many "hair of the dog" drinks.

"Well, let's forget it," she said. "We can't stay up here all night. And you probably heard it all wrong or something."

"Oh, please!" J.P. was in agony; it was seldom that he had a chance to do something first, as it were—to, in his own mind, win over Winnie. This would be an undoubted feather in his cap, if only it worked out. "Please . . . let's just wait a little longer!"

"J.P., you know they're not coming now! I hear dishes . . . and silver and stuff! Dinner's already started! I can't go in there by myself . . . it's not my house! But if it *were* . . . !"

J.P. knew with absolute certainty that Winnie would not hesitate to barge in on her own father, who often had big business deals over the dinner table, and who had what seemed to J.P. rather a forbidding, distant manner. But then Winnie was different. Well . . . he squared his shoulders mentally, and spoke. "All right. I'll go. But you come in behind me, hear?"

The dining-room was huge, like most of the rooms, and furnished in a vaguely Gothic style, to match the arching windows set high and narrow in the rough-plastered white walls. There was a long, narrow table which had once graced a monastery hall, or so it was said, and a dozen or so high-backed, uncomfortable-looking chairs, most of them still against the wall, for the table tonight was far too big for the guests. There seemed to be only the two they had seen, aside from Mordecai, who must have walked over from his house next door. Sammy sat at the head of the table, looking glumly into his glass, something brown with ice; the others were drinking wine from thin, tall goblets; the black butler-gardener-chauffeur collected plates; they were between courses. Solange looked beautiful, as always, in an apricot-colored slip dress, all pleats, which turned her hair to bright bronze. She saw the children first, in the mirror on the far wall, turning quickly. "J.P.! And Winnie! Has something happened? You ought both of you to be in bed! What is it?"

"It's not bedtime yet, Mama," said J.P. inconsequently. "We don't go to bed till at least nine."

Winnie poked him from behind. "Ask!"

"Oh. Well . . . Mama." J.P. took a deep breath and then ran all the words together. "Where are the fairies? You said there'd be fairies!"

And here, in later years, J.P.'s memory failed him; he recalled nothing except the stricken tableau, five white faces staring at the two children framed in the doorway. Winnie swears the young men, or at least one of them, colored crimson and the other giggled and flapped his wrist; but then Winnie has always been very cool. Actually, Mordecai rose to the occasion with a not very good imitation of Bea Lillie singing "There are fairies at the bottom of our garden," and so got onto the subject of gardens, while Solange dealt with the children, packing them off to their beds next door and saying she would explain later. Winnie swears that she did, delicately, but J.P. does not remember this either. The story is, after all, on him, and so he has probably blocked it out.

The children remember, both of them, those early days as being easy, golden days, in spite of school and servants, bedtimes and lessons; and so they were, for the two ran freely through vast, new, empty houses all day; empty of people, that is, for only the kitchen area held the warmth of bodies and the smell of daytime living. The other rooms opened one into another like chambers in some enchanted cave, the sun glinting upon great crystal chandeliers and slanting through the slatted Venetian blinds to lie in bright, warm pools upon the polished floors. They slid down banisters that imitated the graceful curves of statelier homes; their light voices echoed through the emptiness of hall and bedroom, lounge and library. At night, of course, they disappeared into nurseries, but the days were theirs.

Only one room in any of the three great houses was closed to them; locked; an upstairs room in Mendy's house. "I'll get the key," said Winnie. "I know where it's kept."

"Maybe you shouldn't," said J.P., who had a natural timidity. "Maybe your father wouldn't want you to."

"I asked him once. He said he'd take me in there himself one day. When I was older. That's what he said. But I want to see it now." Winnie never wanted to wait; it was how she was made.

One day quite soon afterward she came to J.P. looking solemn, for her, and said, "I've been there. Inside the locked room."

She looked strange; he did not know in what way strange; just strange. Probably secretive; you couldn't always tell with Winnie. He



began to wheedle. "Oh, Winnie, let me see, too! I'll give you my Scout knife, the one I just got, with the little can-opener."

She turned out her hand in an oddly adult gesture. "Never mind," she said. "I don't want anything. I'll take you. But you have to promise cross your heart you'll never tell."

He crossed his heart. "I swear—"

"In blood?"

He hesitated; he did not like blood, it made him sick. "All right," he said. "In blood." And held out his arm, with the sleeve pulled up, shutting his eyes tight. She jabbed him with a pin, and squeezed, then did the same to her own skinny arm, frowning in concentration. "You have to look, silly. Now—say the words."

They rubbed the scant droplets of blood together, smearing a little on one another's arms, and intoned gravely, "I swear in this, my own private blood, never to divulge the secret of my blood brother."

They went to Winnie's house. Winnie tiptoed to the door which led to the kitchen and the servants' rooms, opening it a crack. "It's all right," she whispered. "They're having coffee. The maids're finished upstairs . . . no one will see. Come on."

It was a beautiful room, the secret room; that was how J.P. had come to think of it, "the secret room." It was large, almost square, with a charming little bend, making an alcove, where there was a big window seat, covered in rose brocade, like the bed-hangings. A book was flung, opened, face down, upon the upholstered seat, as if it had just been left there overnight. The title read, *Vanity Fair*. The room was all done in rose and silver and white, the wallpaper French, antique, with a pattern of trellised roses and silver ribbons. The carpet was Aubusson and precious, but they did not know that; it, too, was rose and white, faintly touched with a soft, verdant green. There was laid out upon the bed a lovely dressing-gown, silver lace, with slippers to match, placed side by side upon the rug below. Softly they stole through the silent, beautiful room, holding hands. Upon the skirted dressing-table the little jars and boxes stood in sweet disarray. A scent bottle had the stopper out and smelled of itself: roses. A smell of roses hung in the air, real roses; they were everywhere, vases of them, baskets of them; a small, slender rose tree stood near an open window to catch the sun. It had been freshly watered; the earth looked moist and black at its roots. All the flowers were fresh, freshly cut, freshly arranged.

On one wall, covering it, was a huge blow-up, sepia-tinted, of Laverne in her last role, Becky Sharpe, in *Vanity Fair*; the other

walls were mirrored, so that the great photograph seemed to fill all the corners of the room; it was Laverne's room, of course. "My mother's room," said Winnie softly. "Look." She led him to the mantel; the fireplace below was laid with logs, all ready, waiting the touch of a match. Over the fireplace hung a portrait in oils of a blonde girl, dressed in muslins and blue ribbons, in the style of Watteau; under the formal, stylized prettiness of the rosebud mouth, out of the round blue eyes, stole a look, almost sly, of Laverne; neither child spoke of it. "Look," said Winnie again, reaching out her hand to take up the little alabaster jar which stood upon the mantel. "Be careful," she said softly. "It's her ashes."

J.P. drew back; he could not take the jar from her. "Oh, no," he breathed. "Oh, no . . ."

"It is," she said. "They're in there. It says so. Read it."

She turned the jar so that the alabaster side caught the light; incised upon it in small, flowing script was the legend, "These are the mortal remains of my beloved wife, Laverne, mother of my daughter, Winifred." And then some words in French; Winnie read them aloud in a flat little voice. "*Où sont les neiges d'antan?*"

"What does it mean?" whispered J.P.

"I'm not sure," said Winnie. "I haven't had any French yet. That's French . . . I looked in a dictionary. Something about snows long ago . . . it can't be quite right. I haven't got it quite right. I copied it down, though. I'll find out later. Later—when I know more words." She turned to look at him. "Do you want to hold it? Go on. It's all right. You can."

He put out his hand, taking the jar. "It's so light," he said, surprised. "I didn't expect them—it—to be so light."

"I guess she wasn't very heavy even when—"

"I guess not," he said. "No. She was thin—like Mama. Thinner, even."

"Prettier," said Winnie, looking at him oddly.

He swallowed, torn between delicacy and loyalty. "I guess so," he said.

Mollified, Winnie said, "Well—not prettier, exactly. But different. More like a flower, I think. I guess that's why Daddy put all these flowers in here—where she was."

J.P. nodded; it was a thing that children understood. "Here," he said, giving her the urn. "You put it back . . . the way you want it." And he turned away. Winnie reached up and put the jar back on the mantel; her lips were moving, silently; she put the hand into her pin-

afore pocket to keep the touch of her mother for a while. "Let's go, I think," she said, with a last look around the room. She turned the key in the lock with that same hand, putting the key as well into her pocket, and holding it.

The two children did not speak until they had gone out the front door, into the late-afternoon sun. They went around the side of the house to the big lawn swing-glider, where they liked to sit sometimes. J.P. rocked it with his foot; he was just getting to be tall enough to reach the ground.

"I'm glad you took me there . . . into your mother's room, Winnie," he said, in a small voice.

"Yes," she answered. "It's an experience."

They never spoke of it again.

## *Chapter 18*

When J.P. was beginning to grow up—he must have been ten or thereabouts—the Savages' house, once so empty, was, oftener than not, full to overflowing. It had not seemed empty to him before, for Winnie occupied it with him; now it did not seem full, for she was not there. Winnie had been sent to school in the East, an expensive girls' school in Vermont, from which she wrote gloomy letters, full of strange, harsh landscapes, farm animals, and snowed-in days. There was nothing more she could learn in the little school here in Hollywood, and Mendy thought she needed the companionship of other girls as quick and clever as herself. It was that kind of school, now becoming popular, where the students lived as Thoreau bade, close to nature, in rapport with the elements, doing chores like any farm girl. She hated it, she wrote, but between the lines J.P. read, for he knew her so well, excitement and flavor, a new vitality, and even peace. Her letters saddened him, and he set himself, perversely, to writing bright, giddy ones in return, full of the extravagance and ebullience of this life he longed to be away from.

For he had a family now—a bewilderingly large and fluctuating one. Solange's mother, still young, had died in the last sweep of influenza, in the winter past; the illness had been getting milder

every year, and few died of it now, but that lady did. "Mother was always so healthy!" wept Solange. But the lady, a former school-teacher, had been the heart and strength behind the showboat; without her it simply could not function. As Solange explained, nobody wanted to go to such shows nowadays; the moving pictures had taken away all the audiences. They could not very well charge less than a quarter for live entertainment, even with such a low overhead; one could see a good movie, still, for a dime! So Solange had swept them all up generously, offering them a home, the others of the little showboat company as well as her half-Indian father and her old Grandmother, Emmaline. And so they came, those who had a mind to, a comic named Ted Drummond, a couple who did seconds and character, the Lewises, Angie and Dick, and a rather pasty juvenile with wavy hair and a lot of teeth, Marvin Moore.

"I remember old Ted well, a lovely man . . . and the Drummonds; Angie taught me to sew!" exclaimed Solange, who was excited by their acceptance and had redecorated a whole wing of the château in readiness. "But I had never met Marvin Moore. He's after my time."

"Well, of course," commented Sammy, sourly, "he's a good deal younger!"

Solange gave him a sharp look; she was not yet thirty.

He went on, gloomily. "Marvin Moore . . . what kind of name is that? He'll probably want to get in the movies."

"Well, certainly," said Solange. "They all will. They're actors, after all. They're probably better than most of the clods out here anyway. They can start with extra work at least. I can get that for them, maybe even a bit part or two, to get them started."

"Solange!" shouted Sammy, getting red in the face. "Don't get involved! I won't have you getting involved!"

She looked at him coldly. "You *what*? What did you say?"

Sammy wilted, visibly. "I meant—well, it was a figure of speech."

"You have nothing whatever to say about it, Samson," she said quietly. "These are *my* people."

"And it's *your* money!" he muttered, sulkily; Sammy's last two pictures had not done well at the box office.

"That was unfair," she wailed, melting into tears. He flew to her side, not even stumbling, for it was early in the evening; he took her in his arms. "I'm sorry, darling . . . I don't know what got into me. Forgive me . . ."

"Of course, Samson. Of course, darling." Her sobs began to stop.



"But darling, I do want to help them—if I can. How wonderful to be able to help people! You know that! And there's plenty of work out here."

So that quarrel was quickly over, and J.P. breathed more easily; some of them went on bitterly, hour after hour, he listening still, in his bed, long after midnight, praying they would stop. He spoke now, changing the subject.

"Mama, Grandpa doesn't look like an Indian. Is he really?"

"No, he just says that. It makes him sound more interesting. He's only half."

"The Old Lady does, though."

"Oh, J.P.—you mustn't call her that! Call her . . . Grandma Emmaline!"

"You called her the Old Lady. I heard you."

"It's just a private joke . . . I can't explain. And she doesn't know. It would be very rude if she heard. It's rude anyway . . . we shouldn't do it." Solange's beautiful eyes had a chastened look.

"Oh, for God's sake," cried Sammy, exasperated. "You can't even *spell* any more in front of that boy! He knows it all!" He turned to J.P.; he wore a frightening face, the eyes red-veined and the lines all blurred. "If you're so smart, young man, use some common sense! Would any old lady want to be called Old Lady?" And he grinned, an awful travesty of his own sweet smile. He put his arm heavily on Solange's shoulders. "Even this old lady doesn't like it!"

J.P. was embarrassed, and valiantly changed the subject once more. "That makes me one-fourth Indian, then?"

"No-o-o," said Solange, knitting her brow. "I'm one-fourth. You're one-eighth." She smiled quickly, brightly at Sammy, who was swaying a little now. "Unless Daddy has some Indian blood."

"Oh, Christ! I might have anything! Look what's turned up!"

For now that Sammy was long famous, all sorts of distant Savages had crawled out of their dim lairs, claiming kin. Some were named Saviggi, some Sovetch, some Sovidge, but all had knowledge of the little King's Fool, Sir Hercules, and the first Moll Savage long ago. They came out of vaudeville, mostly, which was dying, hoping to get a start in pictures, or at least a night's lodging and a meal. Solange would never turn any of them away, no matter how peculiar they looked. And quite often they did look very peculiar, to put it mildly; the circus Saviggis made a living as freaks, of one sort or another. There had been a Fat Lady, a Sword-Swallower and an Alligator Boy, a family, all Saviggis. They were only passing through, for they

always had work. J.P. well remembered the Alligator Boy; not a boy, really, quite old, in his twenties perhaps, but with a curiously innocent face, round and open; he was tattooed all over, in the markings of an alligator skin, a dirty green. "It looks good under the lights," he said, with a smile. "Really good, like a reptile. And then I crawl a little, too. That helps. It's a good act, if I do say so."

The circus people were the strangest; there had been several batches of them one year when two circuses had played Los Angeles. Actually, J.P. reflected, they were very ordinary, once you got to know them. The Alligator Boy, fully dressed and with gloves on, looked like any young man, a curate, perhaps, or a student. True, the Fat Lady was very fat indeed, but in a housedress one would not stare, except at her hair, dyed bright pink. The Sword-Swallower looked like an aging Hamlet, and the Snake Charmer spent all her time knitting. The only odd one was the Atlas, whose muscles bulged alarmingly, as if he were going to burst. But he was not a Savage, only married to one.

To do them credit, none of them ever asked for money; they were all proud, all, as Solange said, Savages. But nowadays, as J.P. reflected sadly, you never knew who might be staying in the house, or how long.

Once they had an acrobat who was no kin at all, but a survivor of the earthquake, like J.P.'s father. It had all been long, long ago, when Daddy was a little boy and playing in vaudeville. This man, a boy then, a Russian, had been on the same bill with him, along with three other Russians, his brothers; the brothers had died, like Daddy's mother and father, but this one, Sascha, had escaped. "Oh, how wonderful, Samson!" cried Solange. "To think Sascha knew your parents!"

"I'm sure he didn't," said Sammy. "I'm sure none of the Russians could speak any English." Mordecai confirmed it, saying, however, that he remembered the man's face, and that he was the youngest brother and third up when they did the pyramid act for the grand finale. "Never said a word, though . . . any of them. Never uttered."

But Solange insisted that Sascha must stay as long as he wished, or needed to. "He's a marvelous type . . . he'll get work!"

She was right. Sascha accompanied them to a party given at the new Fox studios, and he was spotted by a producer and given a role in an epic film about Viking ships. "And quite right," said Mordecai. "Did you know the Vikings settled Russia in the very beginning?" J.P. never looked up this bit of information, but certainly Sascha had

a career in films, and with a Norse-sounding name, too: Jon Jonson, they rechristened him, and he became what Solange called a B-movie Douglas Fairbanks.

Often, too, there were bluff, hearty types from the minstrel shows, who did not look like show people at all, but like salesmen; these were Cassidys, or friends of Cassidys, from Sammy's father's side. And in a way they *were* salesmen, for they played Chautauquas and County Fairs, selling gadgets, medicines, and toys on the side. One of them, when he left, gave J.P. a big rubber whale for the pool, a blow-up toy. "That's a good seller, that . . . always go like hot cakes, those do. That's my last one." J.P. had not wanted to take his last one, for that gentleman had *not* landed any jobs in Hollywood, though he had stayed three weeks; besides, though he did not like to say so, J.P. was really too old for rubber toys. "No, lad, you take it . . . there's plenty more where that came from. Your pa and ma showed me a real good time. You take it." And he tipped his hat, setting it down at a more jaunty angle, and, whistling, took himself off. "God, they haven't got a cent, those poor things," said Solange. "They live from hand to mouth."

"As actors always have," said Sammy, sentimentally. "That's real theater."

"Oh, fudge!" said Solange, who never said bad words, though it was getting to be the fashion. "Oh, fudge! Don't tell me that, Samson! I had enough poverty growing up. You might call it hand to mouth. Never anything good to eat, always turning collars and mending stockings . . . it was awful!"

J.P. looking at his exquisitely groomed mother, shook his head; it was hard to believe. But Solange never fibbed, and then, when you looked at the Old Lady (he could never break himself from thinking of her that way, she looked so very old and wise) and at his seedy, sallow grandpa, yes, it must be true. No amount of grooming could change the sodden grin and tumbled clothes of Grandpa Jim or the solid bulk, like granite, dusty, of Emmaline. They accepted the luxury of their redone rooms on sufferance, scattering scripts, old clothes, and used-up makeup boxes everywhere, and never letting anyone in to clean. "It's nice this way," said Emmaline. "Don't you bother about us, Solange, child . . . we'll get along."

Emmaline's stories were legion; J.P. never knew what was true and what was made up, for there were many contradictions. But he wrote it all to Winnie—Emmaline's capture by the Indians, her life as a squaw and, later, as one of the fancy ladies of the Gold Coast, in

spangles and tights. For once, Winnie was outmatched; she was dying to meet the wonderful Emmaline. "I'll write a novel about her . . . in fact, I've started it already!" she wrote from Vermont.

Once Emmaline had a heart attack, or something very like it, though the hospital released her after one night. "Emmaline don't kill so easy," she pronounced, triumphantly. "But—another sight like that . . . !" And she chuckled deep in her throat, jiggling her chins.

Among the many distant kinsmen there had come a contortionist, a Lonnie Savage, the Rubber Man, middle-aged but still at the height of his powers. He had been out of work for some time (they never said how long, only that they were "at liberty"), and staying in the house, in Emmaline's wing. Like all these out-of-work show people, he was always hungry, often in the middle of the night. He had been adjured to make use of the great refrigerator in the kitchen. "Take anything you like," said Solange. One night—it was past three, as a matter of fact—this Rubber Man felt an overwhelming urge for some whitefish which had appeared earlier with cocktails; in his pajamas, he began to make his way down to the kitchen. To keep his hand in, as it were, the Rubber Man tied himself up in a very special knot, legs round his neck, his specialty, and inched along the upper hall for all the world like an inchworm. At the stairs, it became a bit more complicated, for he had to bounce down from stair to stair on the cheeks of his buttocks, the rest of him being every which way and very compacted. He made the first flight so well, and so easily, he thought he might get a bit fancy on the next, bouncing first on one, then on the other cheek. He was contemplating this, savoring it, really, and inching along the landing of the second floor where Emmaline slept. Now Emmaline, in her dotage, was afflicted by a weak bladder. She had emerged from her bedroom to go along the hall to her bathroom, by the eerie glow of a small night-light. The Rubber Man had just negotiated the top stair when Emmaline caught sight of him. She was, as might be expected, given the hour and all else, unnerved, and gave a great shriek, falling like a stone. The Rubber Man, poor thing, was shocked into immobility; he could not move a muscle! When the ambulance arrived, Emmaline was carried out on a stretcher, but he had to be hoisted like a bale of cotton, still in his specialty position. It took nine shots of tranquillizer to unloose him. "I wonder who ate up the whitefish," he remarked, ruefully.

If J.P. had been a bit younger, or a bit older, or if Winnie had been there to share it with, that "year of the locusts," as Sammy



unkindly termed it, might have been an extravagant, picaresque memory; later, much later, he was to pick out isolated incidents, anecdotes to dine out on, as it were, but, in the living of it, it was a miserable year for J.P. It was the year the quarrels got longer and louder, and sometimes terminated in thrown crockery and even blows; it was the year Solange bought a beach house in Santa Monica, where she fled oftener and oftener, sometimes scooping J.P. out of sleep in the smallest hours of morning to pack him into her little coupé and drive, too fast, face streaming with tears, to the long, low house on the lonely stretch of sand by the sea.

He missed days and days of school, though he did not mind that; without Winnie, school had lost its dubious charm, and, besides, there was little left for him to learn there. But he hated the dreadful forced vacations; the shocked face of the houseboy, who, though Oriental, was not inscrutable; the shaking hands and set face of his mother; her voice, saccharine sweet, lying, on the phone to the studio; and, most of all, those other phone calls, incoming, that never ceased; Sammy, haranguing, threatening, begging, weeping. "Let me talk to the kid," he would yell, tinnily, drunkenly; those were the only times he called J.P. that.

"He's not a goat," Solange would say coldly, and hang up. She could sound like ice or glass breaking, when she talked to Sammy, though her face quivered frighteningly and her cheeks glistened with the snail tracks of tears.

They always made it up, sooner or later; once it was almost three weeks, and the studio ready to cancel her contract, for it was losing millions. "Oh, God, Mendy—help me!" J.P. once heard her say, brokenly, sobbing into the telephone. Perhaps he did, somehow, mysteriously, for that was the time that Sammy did not drink for more than four months; nothing, not even a glass of wine. And *that*, thought J.P. helplessly, was almost worse, for his father shook like a leaf—his hands, his whole arm, the muscles of his face; one eyelid quivered and drooped, disconcertingly. He would sit for hours staring into the fire, and start dreadfully, jumping out of his chair at the slightest movement or murmur.

After those four months, when he began, gradually, rewarding himself, as he called it, drinking again, Sammy became unmanageable, and had to be hospitalized, spending months in a rest home. It was the first of many such stays; it was given out that he had a tendency to recurrent nervous breakdowns. At first the movie magazines made copy of it, calling Sammy's condition "occupational," the re-

sult of the fast-paced life of the studios, and his fans wrote commiserating letters to Solange, full of advice and prayer.

After a year or two, Sammy's name seldom appeared in print, for Sammy was no longer "box office." The twenties had drawn to a close, and with them, inevitably, the silent pictures. Sound was coming in, talking pictures, singing pictures, musicals; the stars who could not "talk" were out. The great age of the mime was dead, along with many of the fabled faces of the last ten years. Buzz Browning made one more feature starring a debilitated Sammy, a feature with sound effects and music, but it did not go.

After the premiere, a huge, glittering affair at Grauman's Chinese, there was the unmistakable odor of a flop in the gaudy theater; the fashionable Hollywood crowd sat on its hands and some even left before the finish. Even before that, a sodden Sammy had gone home to blow his brains out. Fortunately or unfortunately, the gun, an antique fowling-piece, would not fire, and a smoke-blackened, miserable Sammy was found, unconscious from shock, on the floor of the French Provincial gun room. When he was revived, he was little the worse for his experience, only "pickled," as Mordecai said; "and *in* a pickle, too, lad . . . for we've lost a packet." Monarch-Miller, was, in fact, on the edge of bankruptcy.

Solange, on the other hand, made the transition from silent to sound pictures easily, with a great triumph. Mendy had seen the change coming from far off; Solange, his biggest star, was the first to make a "talkie." "The Sound of Solange" came before "Garbo Talks," and was one of the great ballyhoo campaigns of the new thirties. Her first picture, a big money-maker, was an original screenplay of the life of Lola Montez, in which she not only talked, but sang and danced, wearing black corsets, tulle, and long black lace stockings. On the profits of this picture and a brand-new, astronomical contract, she was able to salvage the sinking Monarch-Miller company, putting her shares in Sammy's name. Buzz, whose background had always been mysterious, called upon it now, or a part of it, and made a film about Broadway backstage life, complete with chorus line, song-writers, temperamental star, understudy making good, and all the rest of it. Such pictures became run-of-the-mill later, but his was first, and became a great musical hit. There was a fine part in it, a has-been star who makes a comeback; he had meant it for Sammy. Sammy refused it; far from being pleased or grateful, he was enraged. "I'm not a has-been!" he cried. "I'm only thirty-two!" And, outrage as well creeping into his voice, "It's not even a star part!" So another

actor, younger, on the rise, took the part, and became one of the biggest of the new crop of musical stars, and Sammy, saddened and embittered, angry at the world, had another "breakdown," his most severe yet, and was packed off for yet another rest cure.

J.P., too, was packed off, and glad to go; he was thirteen, and ready for prep school. He loved Solange, and Sammy, too, but he was terrified of the storm and strife, and disenchanted with the sick, carnival atmosphere of the close and distant Savages. He wanted what he had never had: the clean, cold air of the Northeast, the stand of pines against a crisp blue sky, the playing fields, the smell of ink and tweed, the easy, casual fellowship of stranger boys.

And with all the strangeness and the newness, there would be Winnie, somewhere nearby; for was not his school in New Hampshire practically next door to Vermont?

"Maybe I can see you in the hols," she wrote, disappointingly. "Can you come to New York?"

## *Chapter 19*

They did meet in the "hols," the Christmas holidays, chaperoned by Solange and Mendy, who had come east on the Twentieth Century, a three-day-trip, to be with them. "Do you think they're sleeping together?" whispered Winnie, in a snatched moment. A bombshell of a thought; it staggered J.P.

"Well, why not?" said Winnie. "My mother's been dead such a long time, and your father—" she shrugged, eloquently, an adult movement. She was so different, Winnie, a bombshell in herself; so tall she was already, topping him by half a head, her nose jutting like a dowager's. She was all bone, Winnie, long arms with dangling wrists, a long, skinny neck, and feet like boats in their black-and-white saddle oxfords. Except for the shoes, and a beaver coat, a present from her father, Winnie was dressed in school uniform: navy-blue pleated skirt, a sort of middy top, and a round felt hat, navy, too, with a brim that turned back, and a chin strap.

J.P. was in uniform, also, but he felt he did not look so funny, for it was only a blazer, dark blue, brass-buttoned, and gray flannel

slacks. He kept stealing glances at her, as they walked; they had been taken to the Metropolitan Museum ("The Met, for God's sake," she had whispered, rolling her eyes comically. "I've been here six times on field trips!"). Winnie, who had looked like no one but herself, now, in her growing up, had begun to resemble her father, but disastrously. His long, narrow nose, aristocratic and aquiline, had become a beak on Winnie, and the curved, full lips, indented at the corners, were too large in her still childish face. Her eyes were her own and beautiful; like a cow's, J.P. thought, surprised at himself. But they were; huge, slightly protuberant, with a dreamy expression and very long, thick lashes. They walked on, their hands brushing embarrassingly, their eyes veering away; it had been so long. They thought, each, their private thoughts, barely hearing Solange's famous dark voice as she pointed out statue or painting.

J.P., who had not yet been on any field trips at all, much less to New York City, was enthralled with the wonders of the awesome Metropolitan; he did not want to leave the Egyptian wing, with its mummies, frightening and fascinating all at once, and its great carved columns; he thought a charming bust of Nefertiti looked like his mother, a little, but did not say so; he had grown a bit shy of her in these months away.

They spent Christmas, the four of them, in that exciting city. Mendy they saw little of, for he was closeted with business acquaintances, "making a few million," said Winnie, "while children starve all over the world . . . and here, too," she added, darkly. For Winnie had been reading again; Karl Marx it was, this time, and she was full of phrases like "the dignity of labor," "the opiate of the people," and "the rights of the proletariat." She scorned her rich father, the film industry, and the good life, and longed to march with the workers, to celebrate May Day, and to smash the bosses.

"How many 'five-year plans' do you think the Russians will need?" asked Mendy, smiling a little over his orange duck at the Waldorf.

A slow flush crept over Winnie's dark skin, mottling it; she opened her mouth.

"Oh, let's not have arguments," said Solange. "I'm so sick of arguments. Let's have a nice holiday, please." She sighed. "You sound so old for your age, Winifred . . . and yet, so young."

"And you sound as though youth had passed you by," said Mendy, raising a quizzical eyebrow.

"I sometimes think it has," said Solange, with inexpressible



sadness, like one of her heroines. They both laughed a little, she and Mendy, while the children sent puzzled looks at each other.

"You did that well, my dear," said Mendy, effectively taking the conversation back into adult hands.

Such small clashes were few, though; Winnie's convictions, strongly as she stated them, were still in the tentative stage. And New York was a wonderful place, with its dazzling shopwindows, its darting taxi cabs, its slush, its biting winds. They went to visit the Statue of Liberty, Grant's Tomb, the top of the Woolworth Building. They rode the elevated, and came up out of the subway to a blaze of lights, Times Square.

They went to the theater, over and over; for J.P. it was as though he had just been born. Here was none of the contemptible familiarity of motion pictures; this was heaven, pure and simple, and was it not what he was made for? He had had a taste of it in school plays, that indefinable rapport between actor and audience, but here, on Broadway, it was overwhelming; one could almost see it shimmering in the air. "Oh, Mother," he said, "didn't you want to act on the stage?"

"But I did, J.P.," she explained. "I was brought up on the stage!"

"You must miss it," he stated, simply.

"Well . . . I never played good parts, not parts like the ones I play in pictures."

"Oh, pictures," he said, dismissing them forever.

They saw the Lunts, Alfred and Lynn, in *Reunion in Vienna*, so sparkling and wonderful, making the words dance across the stage between them; they saw adorable little Helen Hayes, ineffably innocent, in *The Good Fairy*.

Solange had tickets for some musicals, too, thinking them just the thing for the children: *The Band Wagon*, with Fred and Adèle Astaire, Ed Wynn in *The Laugh Parade*, and Beatrice Lillie in *The Third Little Show*; they were fine, but J.P. preferred the others, the straight plays; he felt he would die if he did not become an actor, what he called a "real" actor in his mind, an actor on the stage!

The last show they saw, at the end of the holidays, was a matinee performance of the long-running *Barretts of Wimpole Street*, which he liked best of all. Katharine Cornell he thought a very fine actress; she made him cry. But Brian Aherne, who played opposite her as Robert Browning, was to influence him most of his life; debonair, autocratic, picturesque, he played with a flamboyant yet precise style; J.P. noted every gesture, every turn of the head, every crisply voiced

word. "That's the kind of actor I'll be," he thought, happily, for in a way he had at that moment found himself.

He thought that Katharine Cornell resembled Solange, and this time was not too shy to say so. "Oh, I hope so," sighed his mother. "I love her." She crossed her fingers, too, for Mendy was trying to buy the screen rights, and said, "I'd like to play the part." (As it turned out, Irving Thalberg was there first, or bid higher, and got the rights for Norma Shearer, but Solange did not know that then. She was nearly as happy and excited as J.P.)

Yes, it was a good holiday—his mother all to himself, and looking pretty and young, except when his father called long-distance late at night. J.P. could always tell a phone-call night, for Solange appeared at breakfast with swollen eyes behind dark glasses, smiling brightly and chain-smoking.

It was over too soon, the holiday; he had had no time alone with Winnie, none at all; he felt he no longer knew her. "We'll write," she promised, but he saw her eyes, looking forward, inward, to whatever waited her at school, what lofty pleasures, what secret pursuits.

As for himself, his footsteps lagged. School had not been quite what he expected, though certainly it was cold in New Hampshire, and there *were* playing fields.

He was a "new boy" and subject to all the hazing classic to boys' schools; the sports he was good at were not winter sports—he nearly froze. The whole first term he had made no friends, except one dubious one, bespectacled, fat, and clever, disliked by all the others, who did him no credit, merely isolating him more. He was good in his classes; one might as well *learn* something!

He might have simply left (for in this he was his own master, unlike other boys his age), except that, unpleasant as it was there, it was better than home. He weathered it. By the end of the school year he had joined the wrestling team, he had played Laertes in the annual production of Hamlet, and had made the callow Hamlet look sick, as he wrote gleefully to Winnie; he had been invited for the Easter hols to the home of the class president; things were getting better.

The next year he went out for football and did moderately well, though he was slight and still not very tall, and he captained the wrestling team.

In his third year he was quarterback, and in his last year played Hamlet. Solange and Sammy came to see it, all the way East by train, making a week of travel; J.P. lived in fear that his father would

embarrass him, but Sammy was in one of his good periods, though his looks shocked J.P.; he was so yellow and lined, looking unaccountably small inside his beautiful, expensive clothes. He had not made a picture for five years, but talked grandiosely of several in the offing; J.P. thought, with a pang, that he sounded exactly like the out-of-work minstrel men, clowns, and vaudevillians who had once peopled their house in Beverly Hills. There were hardly any now, Solange said; only an occasional circus performer stopping by on the way to a new booking. They were no longer out of work, those Saviggis, and Savages, and Cassidys, for sound pictures had chorus lines and spots going begging, and between jobs they taught; Hollywood had dancing studios a dozen to a block, and voice teachers were in demand on every set.

"I think Daddy should make a musical, I've always said so," ventured Solange. "After all, he started in vaudeville."

"Yes," said J.P. "You taught me to tap-dance."

Sammy smiled, a painful travesty, cutting deep lines beside his mouth and not reaching his eyes. "I was thinking . . . maybe Hamlet would be good with music. No one has ever thought of that!"

J.P. was appalled. "But—Hamlet is a tragedy!"

"So?" said Sammy, fixing him with a bleak eye. "Operas are all tragedies also. Why does a musical have to be funny? Nothing ventured, nothing gained, boy."

Sammy worried at the idea of the *Hamlet* musical all the weekend, plotting scenes, humming little tunes, trying out lyrics. "It's done him so much good to see you, J.P.!" Solange said. J.P. thought, wryly, that his father, full of Hamlet as he was, had not seen fit to mention his son's performance; perhaps he hated it. "Oh, no, he loved you in it!" cried Solange, hastily, when J.P. ventured this thought. "Daddy forgets. You have to forgive him."

"You have to forgive him so much," said J.P., regretting the remark as soon as he had made it, for his mother's eyes misted before she turned away.

"He hasn't been drinking at all," she said, reproachfully. "A little wine . . ." He had gone through two bottles at dinner!

J.P.'s classmates, far from snickering at Sammy, had hung on every word, staring at him as though he were a demigod. "Gosh," said one of them, "I was brought up on his movies!" And another said, wistfully, "He's so . . . nice!" They were not nearly so impressed with Solange, though she was now the highest-paid star in pictures; they preferred Ruby Keeler, though they were too polite to say so.

"Goodbye, son," said Sammy, shivering, at the station. "Don't know how you stand this climate. You'd never know it was April already. Still . . . if it's what you want . . ." For J.P. had announced that he wanted to go on to Carnegie Tech in Pennsylvania, where there was a good drama department.

"You get used to it, Dad," said J.P. "And I like the changing seasons."

"Well . . . give me sunny California any day," said Sammy, with that same dreadful smile that made J.P. wince.

He kissed his mother, and hugged his father awkwardly; he had to stoop a little, for he had grown this year. "I'll see you, though . . . I'll see you in the summer."

They boarded the little local train that would take them to their connection. "Is there a bar car?" asked Sammy, querulously.

"Right here, sah, up ahead," said the Pullman attendant.

J.P. waited on the platform as the train pulled out. Steam from the engine clouded the windows, but through it he saw his father, seated already at a table, holding up two fingers, measuring, to a waiter. Solange blew a kiss, and tapped Sammy frantically, pointing to J.P. Sammy looked up, startled, his eyes meeting J.P.'s through the cloudy glass, a stranger's eyes. It was the last time J.P. ever saw him.

A week before J.P.'s graduation, Sammy was found one morning in the highway below the Beverly Hills house, lying in the road; in one hand he clutched a bottle, empty, of Jack Daniel's, in the other was a small picture, old and yellowing, of Laverne Kelly, a publicity still. The authorities said he had been dead several hours, the victim of a hit-and-run driver; it was surmised he had wandered out into the road and been dazzled by the headlights. The newspapers, in their eulogies, did not mention the whiskey bottle or even the picture, showing unusual restraint; one of them said he had been ill and depressed since the downturn of his brilliant career. "The world mourns a fallen star," was the caption.

And, in truth, it did; Sammy would have been pleased to know that among the more than one hundred thousand mourners, there were at least two crowned heads. It was felt that an era had passed, a book had been closed; with the going of the beloved Spotless Sam, the silents, too, were gone forever.



## Chapter 20

Already, before J.P. was in the New Hampshire school, the Great Depression, as it came to be called afterward, hit. The economy failed disastrously; experts made frantic studies, offering solution after solution, to no avail. Investments that had seemed as solid as Gibraltar faded into smoke; banks failed; businesses closed; there were no jobs, and breadlines formed in the streets. Spectacular suicides glared in block letters from the front pages of newspapers, while all over the country vast uncounted numbers died slowly from malnutrition. Folk said, shaking their heads, that it would get worse before it would get better.

Broadway felt it; many theaters were dark. Stock companies closed; the road was nonexistent; vaudeville, on its last legs for years now, gave up the ghost. Actors starved—"Good for the figure, dearie!"—with a bright smile. Those who could beg, borrow, or steal the fare made their way West. For Hollywood still glittered; never more so.

The wretched populace, discouraged, depressed, beaten, flocked in the millions to the great screen palaces, where a dime brought escape, glamour, laughter, and even comfort; many stayed all day till closing time, resting weary bones in the soft-upholstered dark, forgetting for this while the gnawing stomach and the empty larder that waited at home.

Film companies pandered shamelessly to this misery, turning out frothy escapist pictures—screwball comedies about the vagaries of the upper classes, saccharine parables filled with sweetness and light, and fantasies that mocked the bitter dreams.

The Group Theatre was born in those years, an expression of a new social awareness, a different artistic ideal; subtly and slowly it was to change the face of theater in America over the next several decades, but now it was merely fresh and crisp, an engaging phenomenon. Later, too, was to come the WPA Theater, along with F.D.R. and the New Deal, and, specifically, the Mercury and its personal phenomenon, Orson Welles.

Like Hollywood itself, J.P. never felt the Depression; after

Sammy's death, there was not as much money, for Sammy had been a squanderer. But everything is relative; J.P.'s allowance did not change; he went all the way through his four years at Carnegie Tech without feeling the slightest pinch. Indeed, they were the halcyon days of his life, as he remembers them, filled with learning of the best sort, theater learning, practical experimentation, and thoroughly exciting conversation.

Winnie was there, too, a writing major, and changed again, this time into a forthright, no-nonsense young woman who affected boy's jeans and a didactic manner. She was far from pretty and scorned artifice, but was still amazingly popular in a certain, ever increasing circle. Her friends spoke at rallies in aid of the Spanish Loyalists, picketed nearby non-union mines, and wore lisle hose (when they wore any) to boycott Japan. At night, in illicit pillow parties in a corner of the girls' dorm, they argued, quoting Marx, till dawn, in a haze of cigarette smoke and a smell of sour red wine. They played records, softly—"Joe Hill," "My Name Is Samuel Hall," "The Internationale."

There were theater majors among them, too, for who can resist the appeal of a True Cause? Certainly not J.P., who was agitating to produce *The Scottsboro Boys* as a student production. Winnie even carried a card: YCL, of course, since they were all under age. Still, it was something, a token, a symbol; Winnie had shown it to J.P., an ordinary-looking little square, harmless as a calling-card; he felt obscurely disappointed. She urged him to join, too; "Stand up and be counted, J.P.!" Something, some unlikely prudence, some vague distrust of the Russians, made him hedge. "I will," he said. "Soon—next week, maybe." He put it off and, in the end, they both forgot.

J.P. had grown up handsome; more than handsome, in fact, a regular dazzler. He was tall and lean, with broad, thin shoulders and long legs, like one of the cowboy stars of his childhood. His red hair had darkened to a deep auburn; he had Solange's striking face, but broader of cheekbone and chin, a hero's face. His eyes were like Sammy's, soft, dark, and brooding, set deep and veiled in long lashes like a girl's. He could not help but know that he was handsome; girls flung themselves at him, and sometimes, in period costume, the college audiences gasped at his entrance. "My boy," said the head of his department, "hadn't you thought of pictures? Your mother . . . and then you have the looks for it. . . ."

"Oh, no, sir! I want the stage! There's nothing for me in Hollywood."

"Well . . . you have considerable talent, of course. I can only say what I've said to all the other graduates in your class: try your luck on Broadway. Perhaps your mother has some contacts?"

"I'd rather not, sir. I'd rather make it on my own."

The head of department looked at him, a quizzical look; he himself had been an actor, far back in his career. He said, slowly, "If you don't mind my saying so, J.P., that's a foolish attitude to take. There aren't any parts going begging, you know, even in summer stock. But a season in stock would be good . . . good experience. That's what I'm advising the others, too."

"I'll do anything, sir," said J.P., eagerly.

The head of department cocked a fine eyebrow at him. It had been a good year for juveniles here at the college; last year, too. There were so many good, more than good young actors; the Kennedy boy, for instance, Arthur Kennedy, and young Bill Eythe; others, too, all showing more real promise than this scion of an old theater family. Of course, J.P. was uncommonly good-looking. If the fashion for the matinee idol were still in, he might do very well indeed. As it was, the boy was almost *too* good-looking. Well . . . it was the policy of the college to help where it could. He sighed, and took up a letter from his desk.

"Would you be interested in an apprenticeship? They want somebody at Marblehead."

"Oh, anything, sir," J.P. breathed, happily.

"You'll have to paint scenery, that sort of thing. Maybe won't get a line to say. . . . Wait a minute! Here's another one." He picked up another letter.

"This one makes a deal . . . you can join Actors' Equity with this one."

This, of course, was vastly important, for no manager, Broadway or otherwise, was likely to hire a non-Equity person, yet no production could go on without Equity actors. It was something of a vicious circle. Summer stock companies occasionally offered the three parts in stock which were demanded for an actor to join his union. This was, apparently, one of them.

"That means I'd get parts, then, doesn't it?" asked J.P.

"Yes . . . bits, probably. Still, it's a start." The head of department fumbled with the papers, looking embarrassed. "There's a fee. . . ."

"A fee? I don't understand."

"An apprentice fee. A thousand dollars." He looked at J.P., a long

look. "If you can afford it . . . it's done, you know. It's perfectly legal."

So J.P., feeling faintly crooked, and more than faintly humiliated, wrote home for the money. Winnie laughed at him, and said, "I'll bet it's the first time a Savage ever *paid* to act!"

J.P. went off to the mountains to play ten- and fifteen-year-old plays, second-rate ones at that, in a rickety, dusty-smelling, heat-retaining barn . . . and loved it. To do him justice, his thousand dollars bought a good deal, as things went in those parlous times; he played not only his minimum three roles that secured his Equity membership, but several others as well. His looks helped, too, and his name (Solange had by now dropped the French spelling and was just plain Savage again); there was a decided flutter in the audience when he walked onstage, a soft buzz of voices, and, now and then, a scatter of applause. If it was not the marvelous rapport he longed for, it was at least better, so he told himself, than the blank lens of a camera and the blazing lights of the studios.

He did not learn very much about acting; the difference between the professionals here and the students at school seemed to be only that the professionals did not always know their lines and, bewilderingly, did not care very much. "Someone will cover, darling. What can they expect—in a week?"

He had two brief love affairs; so simple it was here in the mountains, in the summer; at school it had been torture, and tortuous. One was over at summer's end—another apprentice, due back in her drama school in Chicago. But the other, the leading lady, called him at his hotel in New York, about a week after he had checked in. "Drinks at the Artists' and Writers', darling—can you make it? We're at the Empire—we'll break about one. See you then."

He found the place—popular with actors as well as with its artists and writers—downstairs, dark, in a side street, smelling of starch from its fresh, checked tablecloths and the stale air of last night, for it was just opening. The lady, a pretty, fading, but vivacious blonde, caught his arm in the gloom; she had a drink, long, nearly finished, before her, and one across the table, awaiting him. They kissed; he tasted her lipstick, perfumy, and took a sip of his drink. "Whiskey sour, oh, good," he said, raising his glass. He had learned to drink, slowly over the last four college years, quickly in the past summer; it was so easy, nothing at all like the miserable fiasco his parents had made of it. "You only need to keep your head," he thought, more than once; he was unaware of the comic implications.



"We're rehearsing at the Empire—I think I told you." The lady, no slouch, held up two fingers, signaling the waiter, and then went on. "Well, look. I think there's a part you could get. They're not happy with the juvenile, and the five days aren't up yet." (There were five days during which one might be fired without pay or reprisals from Equity.) "I could put in a word with the stage manager."

"Oh, God, if you would!" J.P., in his eagerness, drank down all his drink in a gulp, even the cracked ice.

"I can't promise anything . . . and it's the road company. Do you mind touring?"

"I love it," said J.P. He had never done it.

"Lots of actors don't like the road," she said, "especially at the start of the fall season."

"No, I love it," he repeated firmly.

And he found that he did love touring, for he got the part. He loved even the one-night stands, the flea-bag hotels, the bleak morning hours at dank, deserted train stations. For this was not the second company, or even the third, but the fourth road company of an extremely popular, tasteless comedy, which played all the smaller towns missed by the other tours. J.P.'s part was good, as such parts go, which is to say he was onstage a good deal of the time and had quite a few lines and no character at all. He was not fully aware of this, though he knew it was no Hamlet; he was utterly bemused by his extraordinary luck at getting a part at all; he was the first member of his Carnegie Tech class to land a job, and every time he thought of it he got cold chills and gooseflesh. Solange was ecstatic, sending congratulatory telegrams every opening night along the way. Which meant, as he thought, wryly, just about every night, what with the one-night stands.

Ironically enough, his blonde benefactor had herself been fired within the five days; it was just as well, he thought philosophically, for the affair was almost over, and her successor was a bouncing brunette with hard eyes and soft curves, a challenge. She succumbed in the end, however; they all did. J.P. never had any difficulties on that score, young as he was.

He finished the tour in February; New York was bleak; he languished for three weeks, without a prospect of a job, doing the round of the agents and producers, hoping for an audition somewhere, somehow. He had hundreds of glossy photographs made, in different poses; it was supposedly a necessity. But when he offered to leave one

at an agent's office or for a producer's files, the girls at the front desks raised languid eyebrows, looking surprised, and took it by its edge, disdainfully, as though it were an object of scorn; he wondered if, afterward, they simply threw it in the wastebasket. "Do they?" he asked, over drinks in Bergen's, an actors' hangout several steps down the scale from Sardi's.

"Wouldn't be surprised," said one young actor, gloomily.

"Oh, they train them for it . . . those girls," said a pretty redhead, positively. "They train them to say, 'Nothing today,' and to look as if we smelled."

"Who trains them? That's the mystery," said another.

"The playwrights. That's why there aren't any plays."

"Oh, no, they train each other. They're a breed apart. I wouldn't be surprised if they came from a long line of turner-a-wayers . . . as long as J.P.'s pedigree." The redhead had wormed a good deal out of J.P., for she had taken his eye in an unwise moment; now she followed him about.

The gloomy young man spoke again, this time with a glint of wayward wit. "I think," he said, "that those girls are really robots."

And they were off. It would go on now all afternoon, unless one of them had an appointment. J.P. loved it, even more than the talk that had gone on at college. For these actors, young, middle-aged, or even aged, did not talk of politics or the state of the world. All that interested them, and J.P. as well, now that college was behind him, was stardom, parts, plays, other actors (grudgingly, unless it were the Lunts), and themselves. They lived in holes, roach-ridden, ate peanut butter and crackers, and nursed one beer all afternoon (unless, as now, J.P. stood drinks), but they were happy; it was the life they had chosen, and they guarded its squalor jealously. It was incredibly easy to be a part of them, for none of these around the table had worked together; one simply nodded and smiled in one of the agents' offices, or on the stairs climbing to some producer's moldy lair; at the next encounter—and there was sure to be one, for everyone made the same rounds over and over, like rats in a laboratory, conditioned to it—then one might speak, or suggest a cup of coffee, and so become fast friends. They were a wonderful bunch, J.P. thought, good-humored, handsome, and gallant; it never occurred to him that, except for college educations, they were exactly the same as all the out-of-work players that had camped out in his parents' house a decade ago.

It was not a bad life; most, being young, thrived on it, in spite of ev-

everything. J.P., aware that his affluence astounded the others, had moved out of the Algonquin, taking up residence in another small theatrical hotel in the same street, West Forty-fourth. Once past the lobby, there was not all that much difference in the accommodations; he wrote Solange that he was "economizing." He rose around nine, having no reason to rise earlier, and breakfasted in the Horn and Hardart's down the street, or sometimes in the Mayflower doughnut shop on the Broadway corner; either place was sure to have another actor or two, whiling the time till a decent hour to make the rounds. At lunchtime it was always the Walgreen's on the corner of Forty-fourth and Broadway; one could sit there for hours over one cup of coffee. One heard about jobs there, too: what was casting, and who to see, and where; it was like a club for indigent actors. J.P. got the tip there that led to his next job, another tour, this time the second company, a step up. "You'll always get a job, with your looks," said a girl, without rancor or coquetry. "Why aren't you in movies? They're panting for you!"

"I've had enough of pictures. It's a terrible life," said J.P. sententially.

"I'd settle for it," said the girl, sadly, tilting her Coke to get the last of the ice.

"Really?" he said, squinting his eyes to look at her properly. "You look photogenic. If you're really interested . . ."

"Oh, yes," she breathed.

"Well . . . I might know somebody," he said, and scribbled a name on his napkin. "I don't know how much good it'll do. But you might get a test anyway."

It did not work for this particular girl; she was not as photogenic as he thought. But several times J.P. was able to get an attractive girl a toe hold in pictures; there were dozens of scouts in New York, on the lookout for promising material, for movies were still prospering. Many a girl, and young man, too, went out to the Coast on a stock contract, at seventy-five a week, a fortune in those days; often they never came back. They played bits and extras, made tests, and generally waited for a break, as they had been doing in New York, except that in Hollywood they were paid for it.

J.P. went on tour again, this time with a measure of reluctance, for he had made friends in town; he made others on the road, though; he had never had so many. "Mother," he wrote, "I've made literally dozens of friends. The people here are tops—really!" He was amazed at himself, for he had always thought himself to be shy; he was not

to know that all actors, everywhere, are friends; the life breeds comradeship, casual intimacy; he basked in it, pretending to be as poor as the rest of them.

That summer he played stock; a real job this time, Equity minimum, leads and juveniles. His cup ran over when he played Robert Browning; only a week, but what a week! Good notices from the little local papers, and a flurry backstage when Solange appeared opening night. "You were terrific, darling!" she murmured, hugging him, and took the whole company out for supper. Oh, those were wonderful days!

The wonderful days were numbered, though, for a war was brewing, another great war, the Second World War; the draft was taking boy after boy; at Walgreen's now there was always at least one in uniform, waiting to be posted, perhaps overseas, making his farewells.

It took a war to end the Depression, but for pictures a minor depression started. For foreign distribution was out, now; many producers had to tighten their belts, so to speak, and those stars who were popular in Europe lost ground here, and made fewer and fewer pictures. Solange, who was now one of the great ladies of the screen, playing those choice plums from the stage or from good novels, was inevitably affected. She no longer had the huge public that had flocked to watch her mindless sirens; her maturer audiences, derived from England and Europe mostly, were in dribbles and drabbles in America. She still commanded a big salary, but she made only one picture a year. "Soon I shall have to think about retiring," she commented, sadly.

There was not as much money, either, though it had not yet affected J.P. Monarch-Miller had merged with Mendelssohn Wax Productions, for Mordecai's company was undercapitalized and had made some unfortunate pictures as well; Solange's income was derived now totally from her salary. Her expenses were huge; the ancient Emmaline had suffered a stroke and was helpless, with a nurse in attendance night and day, and the half-Indian father was in hospital, dying slowly from cirrhosis of the liver. Solange had closed off all but one wing of the big Beverly Hills house, for she could not afford so many servants, and she had sold the Santa Monica property. "Who needed it, anyway?" she asked brightly. "It was a ridiculous way to live!"

J.P. had another year of touring before he was called up; it was 1941, and he had just opened on Broadway, his first part. It was a



charming, sensitive play, about a young soldier, as fate would have it, a young soldier in love with a blind girl in an occupied village. J.P.'s reviews were wonderful, all raves, for the part was exactly right for him, shy, sensitive, brooding, with a touch of the poet. Audiences wept and even, at matinees, sobbed; he was, in a small way, the hit of the season.

The news of Pearl Harbor made him ill; he was not patriotic, and spared no thought for the innocents who suffered in that surprise attack. No, he knew his time of grace was up; it would not be long till he was called into the services; his rating was 1A. Why, he thought, despairingly, had he not enlisted in a special branch, like the Air Force, or, better yet, claimed conscientious objection? He hated war anyway, did not believe in it, detested heroes (except on the stage) and heroics. Solange, distraught with fear, phoned long distance to give him the name of a general who, she swore, could get him out of the whole thing altogether. "He'll get you a different card, darling . . . a 4F card. He promised. . . ."

"Mother!" he cried, scandalized. "Mother! I couldn't do that! Why, all my friends will be going. They'll all have to go." For he had, though he had not suspected, a very real sense of fair play. "No, Mother, thanks for trying. I know you meant well. But no—I couldn't do that."

"I could," said Winifred, positively. She had come to New York especially to see J.P. in his first hit; she was on her way to the Coast with, of all things, a husband. "Leon would, too—like a shot. Wouldn't you, Leon?"

Leon contented himself with smiling wisely and shifting his cello case to his other arm. "I've married a musician," Winnie had said on the phone. "Dad will be pleased, don't you think?"

J.P. was not sure, unless he was a very *good* musician. Leon was one of those young men, unmistakably an intellectual, who look as though there is nothing of them under their clothes. He was seedy, weedy, and almost aggressively inconspicuous, except for large, thick-lensed spectacles with horn rims.

"Leon used to work for *New Masses*," she said proudly.

Leon smiled wisely again, this time clearing his throat. "I quit, though," he said, just as proudly. "They were getting so Trotskyite. I couldn't stand it."

"So he'll go back to the cello," Winnie said.

"I hope you're not a member of the musicians' union," said J.P. It

was commonly held, on Broadway, that all the ills of the theatrical system could be laid at the doors of the musicians' union.

"Well, naturally—" began Winnie.

"Then get out of here, both of you. Never darken the door of my dressing-room!" cried J.P., with a flourish.

Leon shot him a malevolent look from behind his thick glasses, and turned to go. J.P. shot out an arm, stopping him.

"Oh, no! Oh, my God . . . I was only kidding! Oh, for Christ's sakes, Winnie, Leon . . . let's go to Bergen's for a drink! I don't know about you, but I need it. A good part, but it leaves my mouth dry."

At Bergen's, while Leon was in the john, Winnie said, quietly, across from him in the booth, "You were fine, J.P. Really fine. Every bit as good as Brian Aherne."

"I'm glad, Winnie," he said. "Glad about your news, too. Are you happy?"

"Oh, yes! Leon is wonderful. He has such strong ideals. . . . You don't know him, J.P. He'll make his mark."

This conjured up a misplaced vision of the X-mark signature of a medieval serf; J.P.'s lip twitched; he turned it into a smile.

"I like your hair," he said.

It was strained back tightly into a tiny bun at her nape, pulling her eyebrows high, so that she looked surprised. She touched it self-consciously; a wiry curl sprang up at her forehead.

"I despair of it," she said. "This way is easiest."

"You could have it straightened. Lots of girls do."

"No," she said, scornfully. "I like natural things."

Indeed it was so, he thought. No makeup; pale lips and a shiny face. She wore homespuns, hand-wovens, hand-dyed. A gathered skirt, too long, a peasant blouse; no bra, either—well, that was good; his eye rested approvingly on the soft roundness and the small, outlined nipples. "You've got a good figure, Winnie."

She nodded. "I pose sometimes . . . but only for good artists. There's a Soyer of me in the Whitney."

He went to see it one afternoon, later, after she had gone on to the Coast. He was profoundly shocked, and obscurely moved; his Winnie! Completely nude she was, with ropes of blue glass beads and her hair loosened in its dark, wiry profusion. Wild, exotic, and of the desert she looked; like Bathsheba, he thought, or Hagar; he was not very clear on Bible personalities. He wondered if Mendy had seen it; he hoped not.

He had not time to find out, or to discover Mendy's reception of his son-in-law; he was whisked off the stage, into uniform, into boot camp in a sickly town in Arkansas, and onto ship for the Pacific.

There was a twenty-four-hour leave in San Francisco before the troopship was loaded; he crammed the whole town into it, or tried, for he had never been there. "And this may be my last chance," he thought heavily, over a double boiler-maker in a Barbary Coast dive. He drank his way out of there, through Chinatown, along Fisherman's Wharf, and watched the sun rise from the Top of the Mark. Solange traveled up to see him off (poured him onto the boat, in his terms), her eyes brilliant with unshed tears.

"You're so . . . brown," she said, with a suspicion of a quaver.

"There's nothing like boot camp for a suntan," he said, lightly.

"I'm glad you don't have a redhead's skin," she said, lamely.

"Well—as you know, I'm one-eighth Indian."

She began to laugh; the tears spilled over.

"Now, now, darling . . . don't make noises like a mother." He patted her arm awkwardly. "How's Grandpa Jim?" He had not thought to ask before, and felt ashamed.

"Just the same," she said, wiping her eyes. "He doesn't have long. Not long now."

"I'm sorry I didn't have more time . . . to see him."

She shook her head. "He wouldn't know you, anyway. And Grandma Emmaline—you can't tell about her. She's—" She straightened a little in his arms. "It's better you remember them the way they were."

"It's sad for you," he said.

"Oh, I'll be all right," she answered, raising her head. "I'll be fine." She hugged him once more, a fierce hug. "Go now, J.P. Take care."

"Take care, Mother." And he turned away and walked toward the waiting ship.

BOOK FOUR



Palo Alto, 1947



## Chapter 1

"God, you had a long war!" said Monica. "In right after Pearl Harbor . . . and now it's '47! I must say it does seem a little unfair, just a little."

"Well, I was in and out, you see," said J.P., smiling. "I'm not in any more . . . except that I'm here—" He waved his hand, encompassing the recreation room of the A Ward. "But that's voluntary."

"You put yourself in here? In the bughouse? You should pardon the expression . . ." Her eyes were amused; cool and gray they were, almost silver, fascinating him; she was a fascinating girl altogether, tall and pale, like a lily, but something was wrong with her accent, some coarseness. Faint, of course—she had had voice lessons—but he could hear it.

"They're the best bughouses, the VA hospitals, and I'm entitled." He shrugged. "It's a long therapy—expensive."

"Oh, come on," she said, looking at him sidelong, slitting her eyes against the smoke from her cigarette, "don't tell me there's anything really wrong with you. You're not really . . . well, sick—are you?"

"I'm an alcoholic," he said.

"Oh, that! Is that all?"

"It's a pretty serious disease," he said, rather sternly. "My father died of it."

Her eyes widened a little; she stared at him. "Your father? Oh, Sammy Savage . . . Spotless Sam—I keep forgetting, it's been so long, and your mother's such a name. . . . But I thought Sammy Savage was in some sort of accident."

"I guess you could call it that. He walked out in front of a car on the highway. He was dead drunk. He was always dead drunk," he added bitterly. "I can't really remember him any other way. He made Mom's life miserable."

"Mom! To hear her called Mom! Solange Savage!"

She pronounced the name to rhyme with 'flange,' a flat sound—Midwestern? She went on. "My God, if you knew! I used to dream about her when I was a little girl. We used to play a game we called Going to Hollywood. Two other girls, my best friends . . . we must

have been about eight. We would always do the same thing—pack our valises, get on a train, Pullman, and go to a studio and be ‘discovered.’ And then we’d act the parts. The other girls—one was Clara Bow, and one was Sue Carol. But I was always Solange Savage.”

“It’s funny you should have picked her, you being so blonde.”

She sent him a look. “I wasn’t then.”

“Oh, I see,” he said, laughing. “I’d never have known.”

“I’ve just done it, just this year. Thought perhaps it would change my luck.”

“Has it?”

“I can’t tell yet,” she said gravely, looking into his eyes.

She was really rather charming, he thought. He had not seen such an attractive girl for quite a time, almost three months, since he had been in this place. He glanced over his shoulder. “Shall we dance, do you think? Someone is heading this way to ask you, at any rate.”

She smiled. “It’s what we’re supposed to do . . . among other things.” She moved into his arms, humming. “I like this tune.” It was “As Time Goes By.” “Shirley’s not quite Hoagy Carmichael, but still . . .” They moved out into the cleared space in the center of the room, dancing slowly; his hand pressed her firmly, holding her close; she closed her eyes, and her mouth curved in a shadowy smile.

The girl at the piano was one of the “team”; the other girl, Janet, was at a billiard table in a corner, nodding earnestly as she received instructions from one of the “inmates.” The girls were a team, so-called by the American Theatre Wing, all actresses; they were making a rather highly paid tour of several Veterans’ Administration mental hospitals, crowded now in the wake of the war; their task was to train volunteers to entertain in the wards, recreation halls, and auditoriums of these hospitals. There were five teams in all, each covering a designated area of the country; Monica’s team had been sent here to the West Coast; this hospital, at Palo Alto, was their last assignment.

“Oh, God, only three more days!” whispered Monica, later. “You can’t imagine how sick I am of all this!” She waved her hand to encompass the entire hospital, twelve buildings on four acres. “The other girls pretend they love it because it’s so worthy and all that, but really they’re doing it for the money, like me. One could hardly refuse—all expenses paid and a big salary—tax free—paid into a bank for us. It’s enough to stake me to a whole year in New York, even if I don’t get a job—which God forbid.”

"You're going back to New York, then," said J.P., rather sadly.

She sighed. "Oh, I don't know. It'll be June. I'm pretty sure of a summer stock job, but, Holy Cow, I've already had six years of stock!"

"You've been in theater as long as I have, then."

"Longer, probably. I did three summers on the borscht circuit before that." She looked at him quizzically. "You're adding it up in your head, aren't you?" She laughed. "I'm not so old. I started right out of high school. Got a good part the first year . . . it ran three nights."

"Oh, tough luck."

"Yes. It's the story of my life. I've played bus tours, the subway circuit, a couple of decent road shows. But Broadway—" She shook her head. "I've had some good understudies, but I've never gone on—everyone was always too, too healthy. And every decent part I've had—the show flops." She shrugged. "I figure it *has* to change sometime . . . if I just stick in there. . . ."

"You're probably too beautiful."

"Flattery will get you everywhere, and you know it!"

"No, I mean it. I'm quite serious. You know, the theater has changed. I can see it, being away from it—at war, and so forth. Plays are more down to earth, more sort of slice-of-life. I'm not putting it well, but you know what I mean. You don't look like a 'girl next door' or a member of the masses, or—well—an everyday sort of person."

"I know. I look good in period clothes, that kind of thing."

"You look like the upper classes—*Philadelphia Story*—"

"I played it four times in stock. . . . You're right, of course. But it's funny, when you think about it. I'm as poor as they come, the wrong side of the tracks with a vengeance—really. My family are Polish immigrants, factory workers, and that's all they'll ever be. I'm the oldest of ten—honestly. My youngest sister is fifteen. She just started on the assembly line," she concluded, bitterly. "Bridgeport, Connecticut—that hole! I got out as fast as I could."

"And you've never been back?"

"Oh, once in a while. We don't have anything in common. I used to send money—a little—when Mama was still alive. But Pop just sends it back . . . he thinks I'm a sinner. I guess I am, at that." She looked at him in a challenging sort of way.

"How do you mean?" He felt he ought to meet the challenge.

"Well—I changed my name. I was Mary Brunowsky, now I'm

Monica Brown. I dropped the Mary—we all have Mary for a first name, like good Catholics. And then I never go to church . . . and, of course, I've known a lot of men."

He smiled. "That sounds like a line from one of my mother's old movies . . . something you picked up playing *Going to Hollywood*."

She laughed. "Maybe. On the other hand, maybe not. Maybe I'm just warning you."

"I couldn't care less, my dear. It's your business," he said, in a high-nosed English way.

"What play is that line out of?"

They both laughed, and moved closer together.

Unlike Monica and her family, they found they two did have a great deal in common; they had seen many of the same plays, and played roles in some of them; they had spent dozens of idle hours with the very same people, in the very same bars and coffee houses. "I can't think why we never met before!" they each exclaimed.

"I suppose," said Monica, "that I've been on tour when you were in town, and the other way around, too."

"And then there was the army," said J.P., "much as I'd like to forget it."

"Yes," she said, "I was glad for once not to be a boy. . . . I saw that first play you were in, you know—but afterward. I saw your replacement. I'm sorry I didn't see you, but you had already left."

"I was good in it, I think." He smiled a little ruefully. "It was my first and only . . . on Broadway."

"I had a feeling you'd done lots of parts."

"No. You're thinking of the plays I got fired from—you probably saw it in the papers. You see, after I got out of the army, I had trouble with booze. Probably started before, but I wasn't really aware of it then. Everybody drank in the army, when they got the chance. Some people can handle it. I thought I could, but . . . well, here I am. This is the second time around for me—third, really, I guess, if you count the first, just a de-tox."

"De-tox? That's a bit technical for me, I'm afraid."

"That's when they get rid of the effects of the alcohol, physically. You're okay, but you're still a drunk—in the head."

"I don't understand."

He sighed. "It's a long story. . . ."

"Tell me."

And so he did. Except for meetings at Alcoholics Anonymous, where everyone speaks freely of his experiences, he had never told all



of it to anyone. He told her of his early wounding, in the Pacific: "a land mine of our own, as fate would have it . . . I really never saw any action." His knee was shattered, and it was only after four operations that he could finally walk again. "Drinking helped—I thought." Then, invalided out of the services, he went back to Broadway, and was lucky enough to get a part. "And I blew it . . . out of town, before the opening."

"You got drunk?"

"Well, I wouldn't have put it that way. I thought I was just having a few to relax my nerves. But yes. I was drunk. The understudy went on. After that, I didn't *have* to get drunk. Word gets around. The next time I didn't even make it through rehearsals."

"What an awful experience," she murmured.

"It's a nightmare, believe me. . . . I told you it was a long story. But I've been lucky—I've met the right people."

"How do you mean?"

"AA people."

She wrinkled her white forehead, delicately. "AA? Oh, you mean Alcoholics Anonymous." She laughed, a cool, silvery laugh. "I'm sorry . . . it sounds like an Automobile Club, AA."

"Yes, I used to make cracks like that myself . . . but AA is really a miracle. It's as simple as that. It's the only thing that saved me."

She stared at him, a long look. "You said you've been in hospital three times."

He smiled. "Well . . . it takes awhile. It's a hard thing to get through your head—that you simply can't drink at all, can't pick up that first drink. Each time, after I got out of hospital, something happened, an occasion to celebrate—something. I don't even want to remember . . . they're all excuses, whatever happens. This last wasn't a celebration. It was to mourn Mordecai—my own private wake."

"Mordecai?"

"Mordecai Miller—he was head of Monarch-Miller Pictures, a fine director, one of the first in the business. He just about brought up my father, and then, later, they were partners. I knew him all my life, saw him every day."

"Oh, of course, Mordecai Miller. He was fantastically old, wasn't he? Ninety-five, I think the paper said."

"Ninety-seven. A state trooper found him behind the wheel of his car, pulled off on the shoulder. He thought he'd gone to sleep. He recognized the car, though. It was the only one, a white Rolls, every-

body knew it. The doctors said his heart just failed and he must have felt it coming . . . getting off the road that way." J.P. wiped away a tear, easily, smiling; he never minded doing womanish things, it was part of his charm.

"You really cared for him," Monica said.

"I loved him," said J.P., simply. "I wish he could have met you . . . he had a wonderful eye, he would have loved your looks."

"Oh, that. I've had enough of that," she said, bitterly.

J.P. was shocked. "Oh, not Mordecai. He wasn't like that. But I meant—he might have got you started in movies. Of course, maybe you wouldn't have been interested . . ."

"Oh, wouldn't I ever!" She smiled and lifted her chin. "Why do you think I made a bee line for you tonight?"

"Whew," he said. "That's frank, at any rate. But how did you know who I was?"

"Oh, everybody knows. You can't be anonymous with that face!"

"I've only made one movie, and it hasn't even been released."

"I didn't even know you'd made any. But you look exactly like your mother . . . and, as you say, you've made the papers a lot. Always some new starlet on your arm, in all the hot spots . . ."

He smiled. "Do you want to be a starlet?"

"I think I'm too old . . . twenty-five."

"Yes, they're usually right out of school—or so they say. And they don't usually get anywhere. A bit, a stock contract, and that's it. You don't want that."

"No." She shook her head. "No, I want to make it big. Or not at all. And anyway—I'm twenty-seven." She smiled.

"Look," he said suddenly. "Why don't you stay out here for a little while after you've finished? Give it a try. I might be able to help a little, introduce you to some people."

"I was thinking of it," she said, smiling. "I was hoping you'd say that. . . . You know Mendelssohn Wax, don't you?"

"He lives next door." He shrugged. "But he hardly ever sees anybody. Mabel's the person to see—she's his casting director. Or maybe Buzz Browning . . . Anyway, we'll work it out. I could give you a letter. Or—I'm getting out of here myself in another week, if you want to wait. I'm due to start shooting a picture. It's funny. I never wanted to be in pictures, hated the idea, but now . . . well, it seems a little easier, my condition being what it is. You know—in pictures, your nerves don't start till the night of the preview."

"You probably photograph marvelously well."

"Well, I don't know. I guess so. As long as I don't have to wear bathing trunks."

"Your knee?"

"It's hideous. Really. Vanity caused a lot of my problems, too. And disappointment. I always wanted to be a Shakespearean actor . . . but you have to look all right in tights."

"You could do a modern-dress Hamlet."

"Provided I got famous enough first. Yes, I guess it's possible. I've stopped thinking about it now. And with Mordecai gone, I don't know. . . . I studied Shakespeare with him, you know, from the time I was a kid. He was a famous Shakespearean actor, before movies started. He still used to give private readings. He was wonderful."

"I'm sorry I missed him," she said lightly. Monica was a little bored, and wanted the conversation back on her. "I'll stay. If you promise to help me . . ."

"Oh, Lord, you know nobody can promise anything. I'll do everything I can, but it's really in the lap of the gods, you know that." He leaned forward and kissed her cheek, gently. "But I think the gods will smile on you . . . truly I do."

## *Chapter 2*

The gods did indeed smile on Monica, or at least what passed for gods in Hollywood. Mabel, impressed by her stage background, recommended her for a test, and even requested that Buzz Browning should direct it. "And the rest is history!" Monica cried gaily, a little raucous over the telephone. "I got a part, J.P.!"

It was wonderful, of course, but it meant he would not see her, or only fleetingly, for there had been a two-week delay on his hospital release, and he would have to go right into shooting on his own overdue film, which was already on location in Mexico. "We're filming the outdoor stuff first," he said. "Shouldn't take long, not even a month. I'll call you as soon as I get into town."

It was more than a month, and exhausting; J.P. had not been on a horse since his school holidays, and this was a tale of the Mexican wars; he was hardly out of the saddle the whole time, even for

close-ups. His knee pained him dreadfully; the leather chaps and boots were heavy and hot in the desert heat; there was dust on everything, even his tongue, even his eyelashes. "You can't call this acting," he told himself grimly. And yet it was good, the picture, a good script, stark and uncompromising, and his part was fine; it would make him on the screen, if he was halfway decent in it. And the studio work would be easier; still not acting, to his mind, but easier.

"It's a director's medium, Mother—I've said that all along. I don't get much out of it."

Solange looked wonderful, fifteen years younger than her forty-seven years; a little plump, perhaps, in her retirement, but a face as fresh as a girl's, her hair swept back off her forehead, becoming; the scar was a faint whiteness against her tan, barely noticeable. She was drinking Coca-Cola, along with him; he knew she hated it, and he was faintly irritated.

"Have a drink, Mother," he said, sharply, interrupting himself. "You always have a drink in the evening. I don't mind, really. It won't bother me at all."

She looked startled, as if he had slapped her. "Oh, God, another rejection," he thought. "I've hurt her, not accepting her little sacrifice." She said nothing, still staring at him, rather bemused; finally she said, with an air of brushing away cobwebs, too brightly, "So like Sammy you looked just then, it took my breath away. You so seldom do. . . . What? Oh, yes, the drink. Oh, well, I'll wait till Aristide comes. He'll mix a martini."

"Aristide," he thought, and smiled. "Has a night gone by, since Dad died, that Aristide has not spent here, with Solange?" He was sweet, in his chaste devotion, but how tiresome they were together, with all the reminiscing, all the nostalgia, all the long-dead past.

Solange went on, her face glowing. "You were talking about pictures being a director's medium . . . oh, yes, you're so right, J.P.! Do you remember any of Aristide's films?"

"Well, of course, Mother! I remember—" And he stopped, for he could not, really; Aristide had not made a film for longer than Solange. "I saw *Carmen* at the Museum of Modern Art . . . you look exactly the same."

"Oh, how silly, J.P.!" She made as if to wave him away, impatiently. "But even that picture . . . so long ago. You can tell he was a great director! I wish I'd seen it! I've almost forgotten. . . ." She had that look again, bemused, rapt. "What a great face she has, really," he thought, proud of her. Her wonderful face changed again, a



lightning look, almost arch, her eyes lengthening. "I've got a surprise for you . . . two surprises, really. But let's wait for Aristide—and the others."

"Others?" he asked, lightly. "Are we having a party?"

"No. Just Mabel . . . and Winnie—she's here from New York."

"Winnie! My God, I haven't seen her for years."

Solange looked at him, sharply. "You saw her at Mordecai's funeral. You talked to her. Don't you remember?"

"No," he said, chastened. "No, I don't remember . . . it's lost in the mists of alcohol, I'm afraid. But I'm glad you reminded me. I'll pretend to remember."

"Oh, not for Winnie!" she exclaimed. "Winnie understands. We've talked about it."

J.P. was a little miffed, unreasonably; he did not like to think of them talking him over. "I thought Winnie lived in New York," he said.

"So she does," said Solange. "But she's out here to work on a picture." Like everybody else, he thought, thinking of Monica, a New Yorker too.

Solange went on. "They're doing a film from her new book—have you read it?"

"I haven't read anything in years," he said, ruefully.

"Well, this is something special. It got wonderful reviews and was nominated for the National Book Award. Our Winnie! To think of it!"

J.P. smiled to himself. It was just like Solange to behave as though nothing she herself had done was of any importance. She was looking about her now, turning over cushions, vaguely searching.

"I had it here in this room . . . now where has it gone? Have you seen it?"

"I just got here, Mother, remember?"

"*The Alligator Boy*, it's called, a beautiful story—so sad. It'll make a wonderful movie—if they find the right boy."

"*The Alligator Boy* . . . I wonder . . ." J.P. was remembering the family from the circus, those other Savages, and the tattooed young man; that must be where Winnie had got the idea; Winnie remembered everything. As a novelist should, he supposed wryly, hoping he would not make copy for her himself.

"Oh, there's Aristide!" He had not heard the bell, but Solange had run to meet him, lightly as a girl; she did not keep a maid now, only a cook-housekeeper too cross to leave the kitchen. They came in arm-

in-arm, like Darby and Joan, he thought, nastily. He had always thought Aristide an old fraud. He submitted to Aristide's French embrace, standing stiffly to be kissed on both cheeks, feeling a fool. Aristide had changed, and why not? He, J.P., had hardly been present, so to speak, on those occasions when they'd met in the last few years. And Aristide was getting on, no doubt about it. How old was he? Ten years—more, perhaps—older than Solange. He had lost flesh, and his frame, too, seemed to have shrunk; he was a wizened, dapper figure now, like an aging Adolphe Menjou, his upturned mustache the only happy note in a newly melancholy face.

"My boy," he boomed, in the voice of a fat man, "You're looking fine . . . just fine!" He stood back, holding J.P. at arms' length like some dubious *objet d'art*. "Good God," thought J.P., "have they all been talking me over?"

"I'm *feeling* fine, sir," he said, "except for saddle sores."

"J.P.'s making a cowboy picture," said Solange. She had called it that all along; it was no use explaining.

"We'll be shooting in the studio from now on . . . thank God," he said.

"Wonderful face for it," said Aristide. "Wonderful face . . . just like your mother."

"I was just saying," said Solange, "that I saw a look of Sammy about him just now."

"The eyes, perhaps. Yes. Wonderful eyes. Just like your father's."

"He is uncomfortable with me," thought J.P. "Why? Perhaps he doesn't like me very much either." "Have a drink, sir?" He moved to the bar.

"No, J.P.," said Solange, "let Aristide make them. He knows what I like."

"Martinis . . . half vermouth, my own recipe. . . ."

"God," thought J.P., "how awful!"

"The trick is in the chilling . . . lots of ice, and then shake, shake, shakel!" Aristide turned to him. "You'll try one? . . . Oh—yes . . . no . . . that's right. . . ." Aristide looked shy, suddenly, fumbling the ice. "He's probably very nice, really," thought J.P.

"I'm fine, sir. I still have my Coke."

"Here you are, then, my dear," said Aristide, handing Solange a glass.

"Wait," cried Solange, breathily. "Don't drink yet! Let's tell J.P. first." Her long eyes shone.

Aristide cleared his throat. "Yes—well, my boy . . . your mother has done me the honor to become my wife."

"No, not yet, Aristide, we haven't done it yet!" She giggled. "His English! Still, after so long!" She turned to her son. "We're going to get married, J.P."

They were like a couple of children. J.P. smiled, rallying. "And about time, I'd say!"

Solange laughed, delightedly.

J.P. put out his hand. "Congratulations, sir." He found, surprising himself, that he was sincere; Solange would probably be very happy, at last.

"And wait!" cried Solange. "We're going to make a movie . . . in Italy! Aristide has just concluded all the business, or whatever . . . we can leave next month!"

"A fine part for Solange—a comeback, you call it? An American mystic, it is, a lovely part." He held up his glass, flourishing it. "We can drink to that, eh? Solange's comeback!"

"And Aristide's!" cried Solange, her eyes brimming.

They drank; J.P.'s Coke was flat; he swallowed it valiantly.

"And now another toast," said Solange. "To our wedding . . ."

J.P. raised his glass to his lips; the doorbell pealed. "I'll go," he said, hastily, setting down the flat Coke.

Mabel, coming through the door first, shocked him; she had become such an old lady. Or perhaps she had been for a while now; he had noticed nothing, it seemed. Mabel, once plump, was tiny now, and bent, her fine, pinkish skin all wrinkles. She had let her hair go, as she put it, but had not wanted to do it thoroughly; it was lightly streaked, yellow on white, a Clairol home rinse. "Not all gray yet," she had said, bridleing.

"Mabel!" he cried, taking her in his arms. "Still the same Mabel!"

"Just as fat and sassy as ever," she replied, a little sadly.

Over her shoulder, his eyes met Winnie's; her look was like a blow, but pleasant; they held eyes for a moment, then hers dropped. She held her cheek out to be kissed.

"Winnie!" he said. "Winnie, you're—"

"So changed? I know. You said that before." Her lips curved a little.

"I was going to say you were gorgeous," he said.

"You said that before, too. The last time." And walked past him; his eyes followed her. Her back was as straight as a soldier's, and she walked carefully, like a pretty stork, on very high, thin heels. He

watched her as she crossed the room, greeted Solange, shook hands with Aristide; while he answered Mabel's questions, he listened to Winnie's voice, cool and crisp, with a little hint of laughter in it. It had never sounded like that before, or had it? He had lost so much, it seemed, with his lost years.

Surely she *had* changed, though; he could not take his eyes off her. Her hair was cropped very short, and curled close to her head, like the beautiful round head of a Greek boy statue; her profile was Greek, too, or nearly, the long, straight line of forehead and nose, the full lips, indented at the corners, above a round ball of chin, the great, lidded coweyes. Not beautiful, but she could pass for it, anywhere except in Hollywood. She was fashionably made up, too—dark-red mouth and lined eyes, stark against a creamy skin. Her clothes were not Hollywood either, he saw; she was exquisitely dressed, shades of beige, bare beige shoulders, and a long, fringed stole. "I like your outfit," he said, coming close.

"Winnie's just come back from Paris," said Mabel.

"And all her outfits are gorgeous," said Solange.

"But I didn't go to Paris to buy clothes," said Winnie, smiling. "I went to have my nose fixed . . . so you're not that crazy, J.P. I really have changed."

"What was the matter with your nose?" he asked.

"You don't remember?"

"No," he said, lying.

"Well, then I won't tell you," said Winnie, accepting one of the watery martinis.

Solange put them through the whole thing again, complete with toasts to the prospective bride and groom; Mabel cried.

"Remember," said Winnie quietly, as she sat with J.P. in the window seat, a little apart, "how I thought Solange and Mendy were sleeping together . . . years ago? We were all in New York together, for some reason."

"It was Christmas," he said. "I'm like an old man—I remember everything, if it's back far enough."

She laughed, and reached out to take his hand. "We were best friends then. Let's both remember that. . . . But anyhow, what I meant—I used to fantasize about it, about Mendy and Solange, oh, long before. Even when I was very small, I suppose," she said, musing, "that I missed not having a mother. . . . I always dreamed of their wedding, right on the lawn between our two houses. Even



when your dad was still alive, I'm afraid. I just used to put him out of my mind. I'm sorry."

"That's all right. You said it was a fantasy."

She took a sip of her drink, and made a little face.

"Terrible?"

"Just ice water."

"I'll sweeten it for you, shall I?"

She followed him to the bar, watching as he tipped the gin bottle over her glass.

"Not too sweet!" she warned.

He added a dollop of vermouth and an ice cube. "Try that."

"M-m-m," she said, swallowing hard. "It's a good thing my hair is curly."

"Too strong?"

"I'll get used to it," she said, taking another swallow. She looked at him, tilting her head a little, surveying him. "This—" she held up the drink—"this is out for you, is it? Completely?"

"Completely," he said. "I don't miss it," and he leaned closer, "when there are other forms of intoxication."

She treated him to a blank stare, as if she had not heard. He laughed. "That's my Winnie!" he said.

She took no notice of this either, but knitted her brow thoughtfully, squinting at her glass. "I don't think I like to be drunk, really. I like my head to be clear . . . as clear as possible, anyway."

He felt the subject needed changing. "How's what's his name—Leon?"

"You really are taken up with ancient history, aren't you? Don't you know, truly?"

He shook his head.

"Leon and I were annulled—back in '42."

"Annulled! How—"

"The divorce laws are pretty peculiar. You have to get around them." She shrugged. "That was rather easy. The next one—I still shudder when I think of that!"

"You were married *again*?" J.P. was thunderstruck.

She nodded. "To an editor in New York, my first editor." She stared at him. "You must have heard. Why, we even talked about it, I remember. Several times. Good God, J.P., where have you *been*?"

"I told Mother just now—in an alcoholic mist. I'm sorry."

She was silent for a moment. "I'm sorry to make such a thing of

it. I ought to have realized . . . I went to an AA meeting once, you know."

"You did?" He stared at the drink in her hand.

"No." She laughed a little. "I don't drink too much, not very much at all, in fact. But I was writing a short story . . . and then, too, I was wondering about you. It was when you were in hospital the first time. Solange told me. I was stunned. So I wanted to understand. Not that I do—all that well."

"No," he said. "It's difficult to understand. Even when you're an alcoholic, it's difficult. Takes awhile." He smiled. "Forever, I guess."

"I'd like to talk about it sometime—not here." She gave him a keen look. "You like to talk about it, don't you?"

"I guess so," he said, smiling. "I guess that's part of the therapy."

"Good," she said. "We'll make a date."

"Oh, my God," he said, standing up. "I've got to make a phone call. I forgot! Excuse me a minute." He touched Solange's arm; she was making broad gestures, acting out the part she was going to do, he guessed. "Mom, is there still a phone in the kitchen?"

"Well, of course, darling, don't you remember? In the pantry." She turned wide eyes on him.

He patted her shoulder. "It's all right, Mom. I *did* remember!"

It was an old-fashioned wall phone, placed low for a shorter person, the long-gone butler, no doubt; he had to stoop to talk into it. The ring went on and on. Surely Monica could not still be at the studio!

Her voice came on, a little breathless. "Hello . . . J.P.! I just got in."

"Do we have a bad connection?" He thought he heard a voice in the background, and music. "Sounds like a nightclub."

"I forgot to turn off the radio this morning."

"Oh. Well, Monica . . . how long will you take to get ready? I'll pick you up whenever you say." There was silence at the other end; she must have switched off the radio. "Monica? Are you there?"

"Yes . . . but . . . J.P., I can't make dinner. I've got to do some retakes tonight. I'm just going to have a sandwich sent up. I've only got a moment to rest."

"Oh. Why didn't you just stay in your dressing-room? Isn't there a couch there?"

"I . . . I had to get an aspirin."

It all sounded a little odd; perhaps she was drunk! But no—he al-

ways suspected everyone of that. "Oh," he said, "well—maybe you want to skip it tonight . . . but I'll be working my head off for the next couple of weeks. It'd be nice to see you, later—if you wouldn't be too tired. If you're shooting tonight, they'll let you off tomorrow morning, won't they?"

There was a long pause; the phone seemed to be dead.

"Is ten too late?" She had come on again. "I'll be through by ten."

"Shall I pick you up at the studio?"

"No-o-o . . . I'll meet you here, at the hotel. . . . Okay—tonight at ten o'clock. Bye-bye, darling."

He stared at the telephone, puzzled, and shook his head. Women were funny. Why not wait for him at the studio? Oh, well, it didn't matter. Anyway, Solange would be pleased; he could have dinner at home.

She clapped her hands, girlishly, when he told her; was it a new role? Well, he thought, she could still get away with it, just.

"But that's wonderful, J.P.!" she cried. "We really *can* have a party . . . you must all stay!" She would take no no's, and insisted Cook would not mind, was prepared for it, in fact.

It was a leisurely dinner; there were interminable waits between courses, punctuated by sharp exchanges between Solange and the cook, who treated each other with a grand, leveling contempt. The food was dreadful: cold, curling filets, half-jelled soup, and a too pink, almost purple leg of lamb. "How Mother has managed to put on weight with such fare, I cannot fathom," whispered J.P. to Winnie, who was seated next to him. "Candy bars, I shouldn't wonder," he finished darkly.

Winnie eyed him sternly. "You sound like a bad English comedy," she said. "And it's only a few pounds. She'll get that off easily, if she wants to. Though I think she looks wonderful."

As though on cue, Solange's still lovely voice called out from the head of the table, "I'm not eating anything! Lettuce and Jell-O for me! Annie Spragg is a thin, gaunt woman." Annie Spragg was the name of the character she was to play in the new Italian film; she was full of it already, telling the story, acting out scenes. The screenplay was taken from a Louis Bromfield novel, *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg*, in which an aging American spinster, an expatriate, dies in a small Italian town, bearing on her dead body the marks of the stigmata; in flashbacks the mystery of her dubious sainthood is unfolded, an intriguing and poignant tale.

"Who will you get to do the screenplay?" said Winnie, who had read the book.

"Oh, Aristide!" cried Solange. "He has it nearly finished!"

"Foiled again!" exclaimed Winnie. "I was angling for the job."

From there the talk went to Winnie's new assignment, the film of her novel, *The Alligator Boy*. When the general conversation subsided, J.P. leaned close and said, "I've been wanting to ask you . . . did you get the idea from the young man who stayed with us once? A Savage, a distant cousin he was, from the circus? They called him the Alligator Boy."

"Well, but of course," said Winnie. "Your family furnished all my first short-story efforts, too. Actually, I don't think I ever saw him, it's just from what you told me. I think I was already away at school. I've changed him, too, of course." She looked at him suddenly. "Have you read my book?"

J.P. shook his head. "No," he said, sadly. "Something else I missed. I'd like to."

"I'll give you a copy . . . there's one next door at Mendy's. But, as I said, he's different, the boy, in the book. I've made him not tattooed, but with a congenital skin condition, scaly, like a reptile. It's very sad in the story. Grimmer."

"Could that happen?" said J.P., startled. "Could someone have skin like that?"

She nodded, vehemently, the little Greek-boy curls lively on her head. "Absolutely. I looked it up. It's rare, but there *is* such a condition. As a matter of fact, most such people *are* in the circus, and they *are* called Alligator people. Your boy was a fake, actually. He was imitating the others."

"That seems sad, too," he said, slowly.

"Oh, yes . . . positively heart-rending. Another story there, in fact."

"You could do a sequel." He smiled blandly at her harsh look.

She stared for a moment, then giggled. "Oh, J.P., you really are such a lovely fool. I've missed you." She took his hand under the table. "We're all so serious . . . my sort."

He pressed her fingers. "Just call me marshmallow," he said with a smile. She giggled again, and then began to laugh helplessly; he caught it from her, and they shook with laughter, unable to stop.

The whole table stared at them, Solange looking quite cross, having been interrupted. Mabel raised a roguish forefinger. "Careful, children—I'll have to send you away from the table."



This convulsed them; they were worse than ever, bright red and hiccuping. "Mother—" J.P. gasped between bouts of hooting—"Mother, may we take our coffee into the living room? Please!"

"You'll spill it!" said Solange, annoyed. "Oh—all right," she conceded, tossing her head.

"Wasn't that awful!" cried Winnie from the sofa, where she had collapsed weakly. "I can't think what came over us."

"It was usually the other way around . . . when we were kids. You always said something to set me off. Only you didn't laugh with me."

"Really? I'm sorry. I didn't remember that."

"Oh, many's the corner I've been stood in, and many's the picnic I've missed," he said, teasingly.

She looked at him suspiciously. "You didn't care. I'm sure you didn't really care."

"No, I didn't care." He sat beside her on the couch. "We had wonderful times, Winnie," he said gravely. "I truly mean it."

"Yes, we did," she said. "Remember the fairies?" A little smile played about her lips.

"Oh, don't!" he protested. "You'll start us again!"

"No . . . It was funny, looking back . . . but, oh, J.P.! I really was heartbroken—underneath!"

"I was, too . . . I really believed. I didn't think it mattered to you, though. I remember when you wouldn't clap for Tinker Bell!"

"Oh, J.P., I didn't because everyone else did. All those stupid Hollywood children we went to school with—those googly-eyed, dressed-up dolls."

"We were Hollywood children, too."

"Yes . . . I suppose so. But I never thought so. I thought we were something quite apart, we two. A sort of . . . royal twosome."

"You were the queen. I was only a consort," he said smiling. "I think now that I was only really an extension of you."

"That was because I was older. A whole month older."

"No. No, I'm quite serious, for once. Everything I did . . . related to you, came back to you somehow. Nearly everything. Everything nice . . . I was dependent on you. It was awful for a while when you went away to school before me. But those were the dog years anyway . . . I can't blame you for them."

"Your father?" she asked, quietly.

"Yes. But both of them, somehow. They were so taken up with themselves, with their dreadful emotions, their scenes."

"But you came through it at last . . . in college. You were happy

there. I thought you were. Those were good days too. . . . God, what idealists we were!"

They were silent for a moment. Then she spoke. "You never joined, did you?"

"Joined?" he asked, puzzled.

"The Party."

"Oh. No. I always meant to. But I put it off."

"Just as well, I guess. One gets more disenchanted."

"The higher you climb, the harder you fall?"

"Something like that . . . It all meant so much to me—it seemed the answer to all the ills of the world." She shook her head. "But it doesn't work. Not really. Not for governments, not for big groups of people . . . Not for small ones either, come to that . . . There was so much back-biting, so much dissension and quibbling, and little meannesses. In the end, I didn't get my membership card."

"I thought you *did*. I thought I remembered seeing it. At Carnegie Tech one evening you showed it to me."

"That was a YCL card . . . Young Communists League. I never took the other one, the adult one. Again . . . just as well. It could be a little sticky—even dangerous."

"Oh, no," he protested. "Not here! Not in America!"

"Get your head out of the sand, my boy," she said, bitterly. "The whole atmosphere is changing in this country. Russia—" She pointed her thumb downward.

"I thought we were allies. I thought we were all liberals."

"You haven't been listening to Mendy and his friends." She shook her head again. "Big business . . . they're vicious."

"But everybody I know—in the theater—is at least a little . . . pink!"

She laughed. "Yes, well, I don't suppose anybody worries about actors . . . or novelists, for that matter. But I'm glad I'm not trying to make my way in politics . . . or education."

"You mean—you think we might have a war with Russia?"

She shrugged. "Could be. In any case, all the party members I knew are keeping well out of sight."

He shook his head admiringly. "You always know such a lot, Winnie. About so many things. The rest of us—we're just caught up in our own little lives—"

"Theater people. Yes. But that's nice. That's how they should be . . . sort of—innocents."

He laughed. "Oh, Winnie! But I see what you mean. Mother—she's still like a child in some ways."

"And Mabel, too. And your father, Spotless Sam—well, he was really a waif. A sad little waif . . ."

"Oh, God, Winnie," he said, struck, suddenly. "I don't want to be a waif."

"You won't be," she said, with a positive air. "You're smart. Alcohol won't lick you."

"Thank you for saying that, Winnie. Sometimes I feel so . . . frail."

"Oh, I know," she murmured. "I know only too well."

He stared at her. "*You're* not. Not ever."

"Ha," she said, grimly. "That's what you think . . . But it takes a certain amount of frailty to have a perfectly good nose hammered about."

"I *thought* it was perfectly good—"

"A perfectly good, long beak," she said. "But it worked. It worked better than this one. This one's all stopped up, will be for a year, the doctor said." She turned up her eyes comically, as he remembered her doing as a child. "Vanity," she sighed.

"Oh-oh . . . here they come," J.P. said softly. "I just heard the native woodnotes wild . . . Mary Miles Minter is the name I distinguish amid the remembrances." The others were coming in, talking excitedly, sounding more like eight people than three. "I do get a little bored with the long-dead glorious past."

"I love it, as a rule," said Winnie, looking at him with amusement. "It's such good copy. But I'll suggest that we go next door and get that copy of my book, if you like. That is," she added, "if you really do want to read it . . ."

"Oh, I do, I do," he breathed, gratefully. "And we can be alone for a little while longer."

"What are you two children whispering about?" asked Mabel, archly.

"I'm telling him the plot of my picture," said Winnie. "But—better still, the book's just a stone's throw away."

"Where? Where?" cried Mabel, looking over her shoulder.

They laughed. "In the library," said Winnie. "Mendy must have at least a dozen copies."

"He's proud of you," offered Solange.

"Either that or rich," said Winnie, with her old impish look. She held out her hand to J.P. "Here—pull me up, I'm getting old. We'll go fetch it."

J.P. crossed to Solange, kissing her lightly on the cheek. "I've got a date later, Mother. I'll just go along from Winnie's. Don't wait up for me."

"Do you?" asked Winnie, as they crossed the dark, night-scented grass.

"Unfortunately, yes," said J.P.

"You could break it."

"No . . . but I could stand her up." He put his arm around her waist. "If I do—will you go to bed with me?"

"No," she said. "It is not my wont."

"Oh. Well, I won't then . . . if you'll forgive the pun."

Winnie gave a low chuckle, a rich sound in the soft dark. "I'll kiss you, though. I think we never have."

"Sweet Jesus," he sighed, afterward. "What have I missed? You've put me in the mood, you know."

"I know," she said. "I hope she will, then."

"Will what?"

"Go to bed with you."

"Oh. Yes, I think she will. She owes me . . ."

"J.P.—what an awful thing to say!"

He laughed. "That's show biz."

She took his hand, guiding him around the high, dim shape of the hedge.

"This is something new," he said. "This hedge."

"About four years old," she answered.

"There was never a hedge between us . . . before," he said.

"That's a remark meant to be cryptic, I suspect." Winnie pressed a switch somewhere, flooding the lawn with light. "That's to keep us from falling into the pool."

"Oh," he said, glancing at the long, low shape, indistinct at the edge of the light. "We could go skinny-dipping. . . ."

She glanced at him, a sharp, amused look. "You don't like no's, do you?"

"I feel rejected," he said, smiling.

"Save that sort of remark for later," she said, facing him suddenly, her face masklike in the harsh light. "Is she the girl you sent to Mabel? Monica something?"

"Yes. Mabel gave her a job."

"Everybody thinks she's wonderful," said Winnie. "Mabel and Buzz and—everybody . . ." She went through the veranda door



ahead of him, switching on more lights, tossing her handbag onto an ottoman.

She sat down at the piano, a baby grand, smashing her hands down in a crashing chord. "I'll play for you, shall I? Nobody's home. Do you have time?"

"A lot," he said, lying. "I'd love you to play. I haven't heard you in years."

Later, driving down the highway, already late, his thoughts were confused. Why had she played like that? he thought. So heavily, such tortured music. He did not even recognize it. And he had forgotten the book, too. Oh, Winnie! He turned a corner sharply, too close, and ran the wheels up on the curb in front of the hotel. "And I'm not even drunk," he thought wryly.

"You're late," announced Monica, without rancor. "I've been home for hours."

"Sorry," he said, kissing her. "Mother had people over—it was difficult."

His hands slipped down from her shoulders, feeling the skin of her arms, burning him beneath the cool, thin fabric that covered them. He pulled the loose garment—a robe?—off her shoulder, expertly, delicately. "You were ready for me," he said.

"But of course," she answered, and laughed.

## *Chapter 3*

J.P. saw Monica nearly every night, usually late, often close to midnight, driving home in the small hours through the deserted streets, yawning. "It gets to be a drag," he thought after three weeks or so, though she was a sexy piece, right enough, with enough energy for two. He was often dull and fuzzy in the mornings at the studio, as though he had a hangover; it did not hurt his performance, though; it seemed you could not slow down enough for films; the rushes looked wonderful.

Solange and Aristide were married quietly in a registry office, leaving immediately for Paris. Solange, already thin again, wore blue. "Borrowed," she said, happily; she had got it wrong, the old verse.

"It's 'Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue,'" Winnie whispered, giggling.

"You'll not get me into hysterics again, my girl," J.P. whispered back. "I'm overdue at the studio—I haven't time."

"I'll drive them to the airport," said Winnie. "My time's my own . . . now that the story conferences are over."

It was his only glimpse of Winnie in nearly two months; sometimes he saw her light, from an upper window, lonely against the late-night dark; did she work so late, or was she wakeful? He felt an unaccountable poignancy, passing through his own dark halls to his bedroom. Once, with an unaccustomed hour or two to spare between business and pleasure, he walked around the high hedge and up to her veranda door. "She's gone to the movies," said Mabel, and wondered why he laughed.

Before this current film was finished, he was signed for another picture, at a substantial increase; he suspected that if he had waited, he might have got even more money; he was no fool, and he could see that his performance was something quite special, as films went. But he had not made a cent in so long, and the new contract gave him a sense of security. He was working, he had a girl, not too demanding, and he was not drinking; he was reasonably content.

Finally, shooting was finished, and he had nothing to do all of one day except some makeup tests in the afternoon. It was midmorning, and he was luxuriating in the pool, for once; usually he had no time for more than a quick dip. It was one of those days you get occasionally in a Southern California summer, overcast and still; he heard a bird wing by overhead. Behind the hedge a twig snapped under someone's foot; he ducked down lower in the water, self-conscious, as always, about his scarred and twisted knee.

It was Winnie, in an orange wool swimsuit, carrying a towel. "I heard you splashing," she said.

"Come on in."

"No, I've had my quota for today . . . my fingertips are all wrinkled from staying in too long. I always do—in defiance of the days when Mabel used to make me come out. I never knew why. Was she afraid I'd swell up like a corpse, or did she think the wrinkled fingers looked like a washerwoman's?"

"I expect she just got tired of keeping an eye on you. . . . There isn't any sun," he said, as Winnie stretched herself out on her towel near the edge.

"Oh, I'll tan anyway—I always do. There's sun up there some-

where. Come out and keep me company. Your fingers must be worse than mine. You've been in there ages."

He said nothing, but ducked down lower and began treading water. She rolled over on her stomach and gazed down into the clear water, then shot him a keen glance. "I can see it anyway, you know," she said.

"What?" He felt his face heat, the flush creeping up.

"Come on, J.P., this is Winnie! It looks a bastard, I must say. Come out and let me have a good look. A busted knee is nothing to be ashamed of, you know . . . war wounds and all that." She smiled and patted the towel beside her.

He shook his head. "No one has ever seen it . . . except doctors and nurses."

Her jaw dropped, comically, as it used to do; he almost smiled. "J.P.!" she cried softly. "What about all those girls? Starlets, et cetera. What about—you know—bedtime?" she finished, delicately.

He did smile then. "I gave you a chance to find out. You wouldn't take it."

"No subject-changing, now. What do you do . . . wear woolies?"

"You could say that," he said, gravely. "In a long run," he went on, "I wear pajamas. For one-night stands, I just keep on my trousers."

"J.P.," she said solemnly. "I'm shocked. Really. This is . . . something akin to love you're talking about."

He grinned. "Monica, for instance, likes it. She thinks tweed is kinky."

"That figures," Winnie muttered, just loud enough.

His grin broadened. "You've met Monica?"

"Just a little," she said, coolly, lifting her chin. "Just enough to know we don't see eye to eye. I, for instance, like things . . . plain."

He decided, suddenly, and came out of the pool, dripping, to stand above her.

Her eyes rose, staying on his ruined knee. "Oh, my," she said, "that is plain, isn't it? . . . Still," she said, slowly, "I do like it. It's so very, very awful, so bloody messed about. What was it, a grenade?"

"A mine. Our own. So . . . it's not even a combat wound."

"It is, too," she said, fiercely. "Every bit as good as any." Quite suddenly, she leaned over and kissed the knee; he felt her tears, surprised.

"That'll do, girl, you've had enough." He bent and cupped her

chin, watching two more tears well up and over; her eyes were brilliant with them.

She dashed them away, and pulled him down beside her. "Does it hurt?"

"Sometimes . . . in the rain." Oddly enough, no one else had ever asked him, not even Solange; the subject embarrassed them, he supposed. "What keeps bothering me," he said, "more than anything, is . . . no Shakespeare."

"Oh—tights, you mean. Well, I don't see why they have to be played in tights. Not Macbeth, for instance, or the Henrys, or—"

"Or Timon of Athens or Coriolanus, as well." He laughed. "But didn't they wear tunics or something?"

"Togas," she said firmly. "And Henry V wore armor. You'd be marvelous for that."

"Are you kidding? After Olivier?"

"Wait awhile," she said. "You've got time."

"It'll *take* time," he said grimly. "I've got no training at all, really."

"You had Mordecai," she said. "That's one up on most Americans."

"You know, you're right," he said, surprised. "You're good for me, Winnie."

"You've been taken up with your other problem . . . you haven't been thinking clearly. How is it, by the way?"

"I haven't had a drink in six months," he said.

She nodded. "We never talked."

"There's been no time. But it's all right, I don't need to. Except—there'll be an opening coming up soon . . . this picture I've just finished. I can feel the nerves already."

"It can't be the same, can it? I mean, the same as a stage opening, with the lines not quite perfect, and the actual performing still to do. A picture . . . well, it's a *fait accompli*, isn't it?"

"But I won't have seen it with an audience, you see."

"I see." She paused, then said, "You'll have to pretend you're someone else entirely."

"Yes," he said, uncertainly. "I could try . . ."

"By the way, that first picture you made, the war story . . . it's playing over in Burbank. I don't remember reading anything much about it."

"No . . . they sneaked it in. Not sure it'll go. Tried it out in some East Coast houses, but I don't think it did very well. The hero is



Russian—they're afraid of it. Just what you were saying . . . the climate of the times."

"Have you seen it?"

"No."

"Let's go. Let's go tonight."

"All right, I'd like that." He was surprised at himself, surprised to hear himself talking to Monica on the phone, making an excuse. "She couldn't care less, of course," he thought wryly, as he hung up, "sounded quite blithe, as a matter of fact." Well, their relationship was always an easy thing, no strings to it. Did she think it was a drag, too?

The movie was terrible, a run-of-the-mill Hollywood love story; nothing at all was made of the Russian identity, he might have been anything at all, English or American; it could not make or break the plot. "They just knew they had a stinker," he whispered to Winnie.

"Hush," she said, intent on his screen image. It was a love scene, the first of the picture; J.P. got out one line, holding the heroine's face between his hands, then the camera zoomed in on his face, and the movie house, half full, became bedlam. High, thin girls' voices shrieked and moaned, agonizingly, as though they were in some kind of painful delirium; the noise continued throughout the scene, not a word came through.

"What in the world is the matter with them?" whispered J.P.

"Sh-h-h . . . they love you," said Winnie, happily. "We'd better duck out before it's over, in the dark. They'll mob you."

Indeed she was right; it happened over and over again, like wailing banshees, at each of his close-ups. "Come on, let's get out!" he said.

"But that's awful," he said, afterward. "That isn't what I want. . . . I couldn't tell whether I was good or not."

"You're good," Winnie stated. "That's why they're doing it. Those girls had all seen this movie before, didn't you notice? They knew when you were due to appear! It's a funny kind of phenomenon. They used to do that to Sinatra at the Paramount. I saw it once . . . I was appalled. But it hasn't hurt *him*," she finished, with a grin.

"Winnie," he said suddenly, "come to the opening with me . . . the big one at Grauman's. I need you, really I do. They'll want me to take some starlet or other they've got under contract, somebody from the picture maybe, but I can get around it. You *are* Mendy Wax's daughter, after all."

"Wouldn't Monica . . . ?"

"No . . . we never go out in public. Bad for my image." He smiled. "She's playing the bitch of the world."

"I gather she's magnificent in it."

He smiled in the darkness, behind the wheel, but made no comment. "She's a good sort, Monica . . . but we've just about run our course together, I think."

"Oh." After a moment she said, "I've been keeping quiet about it, but . . . I've seen her a few times with Buzz Browning, looking rather cozy. Likewise her leading man." She gave a little snort. "It's none of my business, of course. You ought to be very annoyed."

"Well, I'm not. I'm pleased. I like it when girls fight over me."

"Wretch," she said, sounding happy. "And I'm not one of your girls. I want you to remember that."

"Oh, I do," he said, just as happily. "You're the one. . . ." He began to hum. "Isn't there a song . . . ?"

"'You're the top,'" she sang. "'You're the Eiffel Tower . . .'"

"'You're the top,'" he joined in. And they sang, loud in the quiet Hollywood streets, he swerving the car from side to side, in rhythm to the song. "Almost as good as being drunk," he shouted in her ear.

## *Chapter 4*

The opening at Grauman's Chinese was all that a huge Hollywood opening should be; the papers called it a premiere. Enormous crowds thronged the sidewalks and spilled out into the street, with a special police squad keeping a path clear for the celebrities; it had been well advertised. "I always wonder who these mobs can be," whispered Winnie nervously, as their studio limousine edged its way up to the curb. "Teenagers, women in print dresses, and men in shirt sleeves . . . they look as though they had been summoned from their backyard."

"Well, here we go," he said, quietly, gripping her hand as the car came to a stop. Someone opened the door; they faced a blaze of lights, momentarily blinded. "Oh, my God," wailed Winnie, "a red carpet!"

J.P. need not have worried; he had worked all day, shooting scenes

for the new picture; he could not have snatched a moment for a drink if he had wanted it; even now he had come straight from the studio, fumbling at his black bow tie in the dim lamp of the car's interior while Winnie held a tiny mirror. He had scorned full dress and was wearing a tux, over the wardrobe mistress' clucking. "I'll let Winnie knock their eyes out," he had said. She wore an Indian sari, draped expertly, baring one golden shoulder; against its turquoise silk her dark skin glowed like amber. "I don't really know how to do it," she had confessed. "I'm all over pins."

The minute they stepped onto the red carpet that led across the sidewalk and into the lobby, the banshee wailing broke out in full force, swelling behind them into a sort of rusty roar. "The bobby sox contingent," Winnie murmured into his ear. "Your public . . ."

Bulbs flashed above the steady blue-white glow of the spotlights; a toothy commentator held out a microphone. J.P. said a few words into it, properly inane, unable to hear himself above the din. At another microphone, ahead, he heard himself being announced loudly as a great new star, and a hand grasped his firmly, leading him forward. Again, he had no idea what he said; he was half blinded, his mouth stretched in what he was sure was a ghastly smile. With relief, he saw the newsman turn to Winnie, and caught his last words: ". . . Mendelssohn Wax. Miss Wax, will your father be here, to-night?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Winnie, looking as distant as an Eastern image. They were allowed to pass on, into the theater.

"Do you think he might come . . . Mendy?" whispered J.P. Mendelssohn Wax had never yet been seen at one of these circus affairs, not even his own. "I really don't know," she whispered back, shrugging. "We don't speak."

They were shown to their seats, a box. "Are these what they call the best seats?" asked Winnie. "You can't see the screen properly."

"But everybody can see *us*," said J.P., grinning; he had recovered his poise, now that he was through the crush and actually seated. "Whew—what an ordeal!" he exclaimed. "*You* did beautifully, as unruffled as a peacock."

"I was shaking in my shoes," she said. "I can't think how you got out all those sentences. To the manner born, I guess."

"Now we can settle down and watch the real celebrities," he said, smiling. "There's Tallulah! God, what a creature! And there's Cary Grant behind her, with his new wife . . . pretty . . ."

"Lillian Hellman!" she cried softly, clutching his arm. "God, how

wonderful she looks! She couldn't care less, that marvelous, proud nose . . . Now I wish I'd kept mine. I feel so cheap."

"You can have it put back on when you get famous," he said, grinning.

"Beast," she said, fondly.

They sat and watched the parade of glittering stars; diamonds winked in the light, hair flowed golden or strawberry pink, falling in great waves below white shoulders, bosoms pointed in the bras of a years-old fashion; Hollywood always lagged behind the *haute couture*.

"You could paper the walls with the mink," said Winnie, "and it's only September!"

There were the handsome men, too, stars and leading men, nearly as handsome as J.P., but older; the house, filling up, was a sea of broad black shoulders and gleaming pale flesh; here and there a raddled face looked out, haughty, below coiffed blue hair. "Backers," said Winnie. "Wives," said J.P. They giggled softly, like children.

"There he is!" cried Winnie. "There's Mendy!" They looked down where a slim, elegant figure walked, threading his way behind a blonde in a sable cape. He had hardly changed, thought J.P., the fine-drawn alien face, thinner than Winnie's, the thrust of the sharp chin, the tilt of the head, the narrow shoulders and straight back; only his hair had grown white, a thick, crisp, snowy mane, leonine. "It's Monica," he said, as Mendy took the blonde's elbow to lead her into the third row center.

"So it is," said Winnie quietly.

"I guess he really means to promote that picture of hers," said J.P.

"Or Monica," said Winnie. "He's had a succession of blondes in the last few years, but I don't remember that he's ever been seen in public with one of them. . . . You know why, don't you? Why Monica?"

"No, not actually . . ."

"She looks like my mother . . . like Laverne Kelly. Everyone says so. I can see it myself. That silvery-gold hair and the light eyes . . . the features, too. Monica is coarser, but the resemblance is there."

"I don't really remember what your mother looked like. It was so long ago that I saw those pictures—the Spotless Sam and Lady Laverne ones."

"Well, I've seen them all my life—brought up on them, you might say. Mendy used to run those films over and over, late at night, when I was a child. Sometimes he'd wake me up. And he would cry, some-



times. . . . I loved him then. I used to ache for him . . . but that was long ago. We don't really get along any more. Not since Leon."

"He didn't approve? I used to wonder."

She looked at him, a long look. "You didn't approve either. I saw, that one time we met. I don't blame you. Leon wasn't much . . . but he was mine. He loved me, I think, in his way. Really me—not Mendy's daughter." She laughed a little. "Poor Leon. He was so unworldly. He didn't even know who Mendelssohn Wax was."

"I see . . . and all the other boys did, of course."

"Oh, if you knew! All the pretty, star-struck ones from the studios, and the young executive types with dollar signs in their eyes . . ."

"*The Heiress*, in fact," said J.P., who always thought in terms of plays.

"Except I'm not," said Winnie. "Not really . . . any more. Mendy's felt the pinch like everybody else. He's had a lot of flops, quiet ones. All he has is the studio, the business. Would you believe it—the house is mortgaged."

"Ours, too," said J.P., grinning. "I've urged Mother to sell . . . but I guess she's sentimental about it."

"They're all white elephants, those three houses. Mordecai left his to Mabel, did you know? She's renting it for a fortune . . . she's the rich one." Winnie laughed.

"There's a sort of justice there, don't you think?"

"Yes," said Winnie, her face softening. "Poor old Mabel . . ."

"She's still the biggest casting agent around," said J.P. "I'm wondering how some fame-hunter didn't marry her long ago."

"I think she's . . . dumb like a fox, as they say. I only hope I've inherited some of it. My Jewish side is very impractical, contrary to popular opinion."

The lights went down, slowly, and the music began to swell, a rolling, throbbing sound that filled the theater. The curtain rose and the title came on the screen, followed by the names of two well-known stars, then: "And introducing Joseph Savage." There was a scattering of applause.

"Are you nervous?" whispered Winnie.

"No," he whispered, surprised.

"I told you how it would be," she said, taking his hand.

The film unrolled; the story unfolded; it was good. From the first scene, a desert shot at night, horsemen with long black shadows falling ahead of them as they rode, the film cast its magic. J.P., no matter how he was billed, was the star; it was obvious from the first close-

up, the first haunting line. Like his mother's, his face could not be faulted; the camera found drama in its hollows, strength in its highlights, and mystery in its eyes; the mouth, in the hero face, was sensitive; a little pulse throbbed devastatingly, near the jawline; the jaded audience sighed. Once the banshee wail rose, thin and shrill, from somewhere in the rear balcony, swiftly cut off; there was a rustling as of large mice, and silence again. "Ejected," whispered Winnie. "Grauman's is too fancy for your fans."

Was he good? Hard to tell, in the first shock of his dazzling looks and smoky, deep voice. But yes, he was; he was many cuts above the better actors of that day, even the good ones from the stage; here and there some gaucherie persisted, for he was still almost totally without screen experience, but his emotional scenes were genuinely moving, and, unlike most screen figures, he played a character, and not himself.

The picture came to a close amid great applause and shouts of "Bravo"; Hollywood always behaved as though performances were live. The lights came on; Winnie's face was smeared with tears; he felt her arms around him, her kiss, careless, falling on his ear. "Oh, J.P.," she cried softly, "I've fallen in love with you . . . and so has everyone else!"

"I wish you meant it," he said.

"Try me another time . . . it's crowded here . . ."

The sidewalk under the marquee was chaos; there was no possible way to get through; they caught a glimpse, in the lobby, of Mendy, with Monica, smiling brilliantly, on his arm; a broadcaster had got hold of him, and he was talking diffidently into a mike. "Isn't there a side door?" asked Winnie. "Here, follow me. . . ."

She went through a door marked NO EXIT; they were in a side street, narrow, once a stage alley; it was pitch dark and smelled like a cellar. "There—there's the street," she said, pointing to where a lamp shed a pale radiance, yellow, on the sidewalk; they walked toward it.

"I think we'd better find a taxi," J.P. said. "I'd just as soon avoid that mess in front and the limousine and the rest."

She laughed. "They'll have the police alerted in a flash when you're missed . . . but I couldn't agree more. Now which way?"

"Here—this way," he said, taking her elbow. As they began to make for a lighted thoroughfare ahead, they heard footsteps, running behind them. A hand grabbed his coat sleeve. "Hey, Mister, are you somebody?"

"Hey, yeah! That's him! That's the one in the picture . . . I saw him go in! That's Joseph Savage!"

"That's him! That's J.P.! Oh, my God . . . oh, Jesus! Let me touch him! Let me touch him!" Suddenly, there was a small mob, girls, very young; he had a glimpse of a face that shone with hysteria; from another direction a hand thrust a notebook at him. "Gimme your autograph, Mister!" He took it, and wrote his name. Another appeared under his nose, then another; he signed them, too, bending to the task, feeling now the fans' breath, hot, in his face. The thin wailing rose, too, around them, the shrieks and sighs. A hand reached up and grabbed at his tie, pulling it loose; another tore at his sleeve; he felt a hot, sharp pain in his scalp; a lock of hair had gone, held triumphantly high in a closed fist. He could not see how many there were; he could not see Winnie; his feet were stepped on; his face was scratched; he heard his shirt rip, sickeningly.

"Here, break it up! Break it up, now!" Miraculously, police were among them, wielding sticks, threatening. The little crowd dispersed, cat-calling. A policeman spoke. "Better beat it, Buddy . . . those autograph hounds can tear you to pieces." He shook his head. "I keep telling the wife I wouldn't have your job. You in the picture?"

"Yes . . . we were trying to avoid the crowds in front, get a taxi somewhere. . . ."

The policeman blew on a little whistle, a piercing sound; as if it had been waiting, a cab drew up beside them. They got in, gratefully. "Thank you, officer."

The cabby looked around. "Where to, Mister? Jesus! You been in a fight?"

J.P. looked down at himself; his chest was bared, the shirt torn away; one sleeve was ripped from its shoulder; he felt battered. Winnie, beside him, was in tatters; the delicate material of her sari hung in shreds, and she had lost one silver sandal.

"I don't know about you," she laughed, "but, I'd better get some clothes on."

"Beverly Hills," he said to the driver, and named the street.

The cabby still stared. "What happened, Mister? You get mobbed?"

"It's all in a day's work, I guess," said J.P., smiling ruefully, sinking back onto the upholstered seat. "Go ahead. Get going."

He put out his hand, gently, and turned Winnie's head toward him. "Are you hurt?"

"No," she said, smiling. "Only stripped . . ." She pulled the edges

of the gauzy stuff over her breasts. "But you've got a trickle of blood on your forehead."

"One of those crazy kids has part of my scalp." He rubbed it. "I've heard about those autograph hunters, but I've never seen them in action."

"It can be worse," she said. "You want to be careful." She grinned suddenly. "Get a bodyguard."

In her driveway she whispered, "There's a party, you said. Do you think you ought to show?"

"No, it's nothing . . . just a lot of drunks. Let's have our own."

"Your house or my house?"

"Mine. We won't run into anybody there . . . it's empty. We can play records. And dance. Or—"

"Or something. Yes. All right. Just give me a minute to slip something on."

He was sorting records in the living-room when she appeared, not really much later than the minute she had promised; she was wearing slim, black velvet pants and a white poet shirt with big sleeves.

"You look marvelously long and skinny, like one of those dolls Mother used to have on the bed . . . remember? They were all legs. I used to tie them in knots."

"Just try it, my boy!"

"I might." He kissed her lightly on the forehead. "You really do look wonderful these days, Winnie . . . so very chic."

"Thank you, sir. One tries to look . . . not Hollywood. You're in one piece, too, I see."

"I was trying to get some music on to greet you."

"What time is it? We ought to see if we can get what's-his-name on the radio. The one that reviews pictures, you know."

"Oh . . . Canning. Here—let's try." He fiddled with the knobs. A voice came on ". . . a solid hit, should make a lot of money for Paramount. And without doubt tonight saw the birth of a new star. Joseph Savage is a combination of Gary Cooper and Laurence Olivier, with just a touch of Ronald Colman." J.P. grimaced, then laughed. The voice went on. "Joseph Savage is the son of the great Solange, and of the late Sammy Savage, known to the silent film fans as Spotless Sam. The Savages trace their lineage back several hundred years, so it is no wonder that the young man has talent. Among his famous ancestors are the Shakespearean actor of the last century, Samuel Savage, and the tragedienne Miranda, who played



with Garrick. Farther back still, the Savages won fame as the renowned Saviggi troupe of the Italian Commedia dell' Arte. . . ."

"I never knew that stuff was common knowledge," said J.P. "I thought it was just family history."

"Sh-h-h," said Winnie. "He's talking about Mendy."

From the radio they heard: ". . . the first appearance at a premiere in more than twenty years. Mendelssohn Wax, in an unprecedented interview with our station representative, announced his engagement to Miss Monica Brown, a newcomer. Miss Brown's picture, *A Kiss Before Daybreak*, will be released soon. Mr. Wax, of Mendelssohn Wax Productions, was married to the late Laverne Kelly of silent films. Her tragic death brought to an end one of the most promising careers of the golden days of the screen. . . ."

"Turn it off!" hissed Winnie. She lit a cigarette with shaking hands, and took a deep drag. "God, I thought I'd stopped smoking!" She sank onto the sofa, not speaking, just staring in front of her and blowing out smoke. After a moment she looked up and said, "I'm sorry, J.P. . . . I need a drink!"

"Of course," he said. "I was going to give you one anyway."

"Just Scotch," she said, "and a little water . . . don't bother with ice."

She took the glass from him and drank half of it down, making a face. "This is how you get to be alcoholic, isn't it? Grabbing for booze when something hits you."

He smiled. "Don't worry. It won't happen overnight."

She set the glass down. "Well, I don't know if it really helps . . . but at least the shock is lessened. My God, did you hear what he said?"

"I did," said J.P. "It was a little shock for me, too . . . seeing that I knew the lady. In the Biblical sense, you might say."

Winnie smiled, sinking back against the cushions. "Oh, J.P. . . . you're so *sane*. What would I do without you?" She put out her hand; he took it. "Did you mind? About Monica, I mean?"

"Well, no, not really. I knew I wasn't her only . . . comforter." He smiled. "My vanity is piqued, of course . . . and, my God, my interest! Mendy! Why do you suppose he's doing it?"

"I told you. She looks like my mother."

He frowned a little. "She can't *be* anything like her, though . . . like Laverne, can she?"

"Oh, I'm not so sure," said Winnie, wearily. "I've heard

things. . . . And your father . . . there was something there. He was found with her picture, wasn't he, when he died?"

"Yes," he said, slowly. "And then Mother . . . she was always jealous of Laverne Kelly. I used to hear her. She said awful things . . . when they fought. I don't think she can have known her, but she was always—afraid of her. Afraid of the past she didn't know."

Winnie was silent for a little. "It's all so sad and small, isn't it? Such old, sad stuff . . . I ought to rise above it. I don't know why it hits me so."

"Well, I suppose . . . a stepmother your own age . . ."

"Younger, I fear," she said, wryly. "But, if she makes him happy . . . He's a very unhappy man, Mendy." She looked at J.P., took another sip of her drink, and laughed. "It's all such a mix-up, isn't it? Rather ridiculous, really. You . . . and now Mendy . . ."

"Yes," he said. "An unfortunate business, to say the least. I was hoping to . . . celebrate. But this is clearly not the time to make love to you. Let's dance, shall we? And maybe later I'll have a ginger ale."

"I'll have one with you," she said, pushing aside her Scotch. She smiled. "This is clearly not the time for me to get drunk."

The music floated out, a ballad, Frank Sinatra. He held out his arms; she moved into them lightly; they danced, turning slowly on the bare floor before the hearth. Her hand rested easily on his shoulder; her eyes were clear.

"It's nice dancing with you, Winnie."

"Likewise," she said, primly.

## Chapter 5

At least, as Winnie said, Mendy had the grace to marry quietly, in a registry office, as Solange had done. The bride wore slacks, dark glasses, and her sable cape, which had been an engagement present; she might have been Hollywood-bred. For a wedding gift she received a diamond bracelet and a new contract for a remake of *Van-ity Fair*. "I wonder where he got the money," mused Winnie.

The honeymoon couple left for the Caribbean after the premiere of her first picture; it was another fancy opening, for it was a Men-

delssohn Wax Production, but it was a disappointment. Monica came off best; she was considered a fresh new talent, but the stars were felt to be past their prime, and the plot hackneyed and plodding; Buzz Browning, they said, had lost his touch. Winnie and J.P. attended, incognito, as she named it; he would not risk another mobbing. She wore a black crepe Dior, so simple it escaped notice, and he went happily in eyeglasses and a beard. "I haven't had this much fun since I started in pictures," he said. "Nobody knows it, but I'm playing Trofimov in *Cherry Orchard!*"

"You always have," she said sweetly.

Her remark stung him. A perpetual student—he, J.P., who had conquered, or at least kept at bay, alcohol; who had endured a dull and maiming war, who had weathered the vicissitudes of an agonizing home life? He thought about it; in a subtle, inner way it was true; his pains and joys were the pains and joys of adolescence, though he was nearly thirty. At least, he thought, she had not called him a playboy, as the columnists had. Of late they were singing a different tune, for he had not been seen in any of the popular night spots, and no new starlets bloomed upon his arm; he went everywhere with Winnie. They ate in tiny cafés in the Mexican quarter, drove across the border to listen to obscure steel bands, or spent Sunday, a non-shooting day, at Carmel-by-the-Sea. Still, they were hunted out, spied upon, their doings reported, for he was news, already. His spectacular success in his first major picture had catapulted him into an evanescent fame. The film was playing to capacity crowds all over the country, and in the first week paid back its vast production costs. J.P.'s image, like his mother's before him, looked out in color from the cover of *Photoplay* and the rest, and publicity shots of him decorated the magazines' pages. There were news photos, too, occasionally, for flashbulbs exploded at them in the most out-of-the-way places.

"I ought to stop seeing you," commented Winnie one day. "I photograph so badly." She held out a newspaper, which showed them at a dark dive in Salinas. He took it. "I look drunk," he said, disgusted. "I've got those Wimpy eyes."

"You blinked," she said. "But look at me! I look like an Iranian dancing girl smoking a hookah!" For smoke from her not-yet-given-up cigarette curled around her head.

"You look like the Queen of Sheba," he said firmly.

"Seriously, though . . . I won't see you for a bit, regrettably," she

said. "I've got to get back to New York . . . see my publisher, get a contract if I can. I've only got fifty pages."

"A new book? What about the picture—the next one they wanted you to work on?"

She shook her head. "I haven't heard Word One," she said. "I guess it wasn't a foregone conclusion, after all."

"I thought you had signed."

"My lawyer fears they won't honor it."

"You've been seeing lawyers?" He was amazed, for she had a very good agent.

"I have to," she said gloomily. "They've been calling up a lot of writers out here . . . the House Un-American Activities Committee. Albert Maltz, John Howard Lawson . . ."

"But they can't possibly have anything on you! *Those* people . . . they've actually written what might be termed 'revolutionary' things."

"Ah, but I'm a joiner, you see, and a signer of petitions, and an attender of rallies, and a marcher, and a picketer. . . . Besides," she added bitterly, "I write what is considered 'thoughtful material.' My being seen with you is probably the only thing that's saved me thus far."

He laughed. "Yes, I'm definitely a lightweight. . . . I hope that's not the only reason you've been making dates with me!"

"Oh, God, J.P., I've loved you all my life—you know that!"

"Concrete proof, that's what I'm waiting for, my girl," he drawled, twirling an imaginary mustache.

She laughed briefly, and then her face grew still again. She shook her head. "Not yet, J.P. It still feels incestuous . . . my mother and your father . . . you and Monica, Mendy and Monica . . . It's so—uncouth!" They both laughed at her word.

"I wish I'd been couter," said J.P. "I wish I'd never met the girl."

"It isn't so much you as . . . Mendy, somehow. That . . . sticks in my craw, to put it delicately." Her face was bleak.

"Well," he said quietly, "you can't marry him yourself, you know."

A startled anger leaped into her eyes; he watched her control it. She said, levelly, "You've got quite a nerve, my friend."

"Look, sweetheart . . . not to go all deep, but that's it, really. Nothing to do with Monica. That's why all the antagonism and not speaking to him."

"I really want in his bed, is that it, Dr. Savage?"



J.P. smiled. "Not consciously. Not even subconsciously. Not even *now* . . . but your little-girl self does, somewhere." He stopped himself. "I'm not really this sententious. I must be desperate indeed." He smiled, took her hand and kissed it, holding it against his cheek. "One has to let people go," he said lightly. "Let him go. Take me—I'm younger."

She began to laugh, and suddenly to cry, helplessly, her shoulders shaking with it, her sobs loud.

"Winnie, darling." He took her in his arms. "Darling, you're crying! Don't cry! I never meant to make you cry!"

"I'm laughing," she said, her sobs louder than ever. "I'm laughing because it's all so simple and I didn't know it." She raised a face shining with tears. "You're right . . . it's you I want. I want to go to bed with you . . . now. . . ."

"What—upstairs?" For they were in her music room.

"No, silly," she gasped, now truly laughing. "Mabel might come in. Let's go to your house."

"It's broad daylight—but I really ought to carry you across the threshold."

"It's only a step," she said, and blew her nose. "Save your strength."

## Chapter 6

Winnie did not go East; she sent her fifty pages instead.

"I've heard nothing, still, about the new screenplay . . . and I must leave soon: I refuse to share my childhood home with a stepmother. And what a stepmother!"

"Move in with me," said J.P. "I'm all alone."

A light came into her eyes. "I just might take you up on it."

"You'd better do it now. They can't stay away much longer—it's been nearly a month. It would be too rude to walk out after they got here."

"And Mendy wouldn't think to wire, if I know him," she mused. She turned to him suddenly; they were in the big, custom-made bed which had once belonged to Sammy and Solange; it was late after-

noon and he had broken early from the day's filming. "You're awfully casual about it," she said. "Do you mean it?"

"Of course," he answered, yawning. "I need a maid."

"Oh, do be serious, J.P.!" She was almost intense, for her. "Tell me truly . . . do you mean it?"

He rolled over on her, pinning her down. "I mean it. I mean it. I'll even make an honest woman of you."

"Oh, no," she said, "that wouldn't be the same. . . . I'll do it, J.P. I'll bring everything . . . my typewriter and everything. It'll be lovely," she finished, gravely. "Except that your piano needs tuning."

"I'll call the tuner first thing tomorrow," he said, just as gravely.

"I'll do it," she said. "You'll be working. I'll make your breakfast and then I'll do it."

"I don't eat breakfast."

"You *must*," she said. "I've never had a chance to be a 'little woman.'"

"Never? Not the other two times? Not for Leon?"

"They always brought *me* coffee in bed, both of them."

"Oh, well, then," he said, rolling off her, "it's best to break the pattern."

And she did move in with him the very next morning, bag and baggage. Mabel, whose wits were, at her advanced age, firm only where casting was concerned, nodded and smiled. "That's nice, Winnie dear. I feel so glad for J.P. It's lonesome in a big house all by yourself, especially for a boy."

It was a daring step, for those days. In the forties, celebrities did not live openly together without benefit of clergy. There had been two notable exceptions: the Oliviers, while they were waiting for their respective divorces, and Hepburn and Tracy. But the first were from the British stage, and what could you expect? And the other two were such enormous stars that it could not matter very much at the box office.

J.P. and Winnie became a raging scandal within the week; they never knew how the knowledge had become common. "Perhaps Mabel told," said Winnie, wryly. The columnists worried at the item like dogs at a bone, and *Photoplay* ran a long and highly colored feature story; several ministers in the Midwest denounced the errant couple from the pulpit, and astrologists traced the probable course of the love affair in the stars. At Paramount, executives rubbed their hands together in glee; it was free publicity.

Frantic wires arrived from Rome. "Are you married?" they asked,

and were signed "Mother." Finally, she telephoned; the call came through, as such calls often do, at four in the morning. "I can't hear you, darling!" shouted Solange, talking through the time lapse. "It's a bad connection. . . ."

"A rough sea, I guess, Mother," said J.P. Winnie poked him, looking stern.

"You ought to get married, darling! You're made for each other. . . ."

He winced at the movie dialogue, then said, "Winnie won't have it, Mom—I'm willing."

"Winnie needs a spanking!" shouted Solange.

"Here she is," he said, handing the phone to Winnie.

He heard her voice, loud but indistinct, a little like Donald Duck's, over the wire, and heard Winnie say, softly, "I know, Solange . . . I'm a bad girl." The wires hummed again, and Winnie said, "Yes, I know . . . the third time's a charm. You may be right. . . . Thank you, Solange darling. Here's J.P."

He spoke heartily. "How's the picture coming, Mother?"

"Oh, wonderful, J.P. It's just wonderful. It's going to win all the awards, I just know it. A terrific part . . ." She went on and on, happily; he held the phone away from his ear, shaking his head. "Mother," he said firmly, "you're spending a fortune . . . it all sounds just great. Good luck! We love you." He hung up. "Mother always yells on the phone, even on local calls."

"The picture's going well?" asked Winnie.

"Apparently. It's nearly finished."

"I hope she makes a terrific big comeback. I think she's a great actress. I mean, really, you know . . . like Duse or somebody. A kind of great soul . . ."

"It's pretty hard to tell in films."

"I can tell," she said. "You always sell films short."

"Well," he said, looking down at her, "much as I love to talk theater, this is not the time." The dawn had crept onto her face from the open window; her cheeks were rosy and flushed with it, like a child's.

"Your hair is like little wires," he said, smiling. "Like Topsy."

"Oh," she said, self-consciously putting her hand to it, "it needs cutting again. I'll go tomorrow."

"I love your hair. Don't say anything against your hair. I love it. I love all of you. Speaking of that, since we're awake anyway . . ." He took her breasts in his hands, pressing delicately with his forefingers

on their small, hard tips. "Like two little doorbells," he said. "Turn over."

"How do you know all these things?" she asked, moving obediently as he guided her gently where he wanted her. "These . . . positions. . . ."

"You wouldn't want to hear," he said firmly.

"I don't believe in confidences," he told her afterward, as they sat up against the pillows, sharing a cigarette. "I *could* tell you I'd been posted in the Orient."

She laughed. "No, but seriously. Do all young men know so much?"

"You've been married . . . twice," he stated.

"They weren't the same," she said.

"Do you want to tell me all about them?" he asked.

"No."

"There—you see."

She was silent for a moment. Then she said, casually, "How many girls have you slept with, J.P.?"

"None," he replied promptly. "But I read a lot of army manuals."

"Oh . . . you're awful!" She slipped down in the bed, sighing. "Why are women so curious?" she mused, idly.

"They're like cats," he warned. "Remember what happened to *them*."

"It was only one cat," she murmured, "that was killed."

"But it might be you, my little panther," he said, kissing her ear. "It's late. I have to go. . . . What are you going to do today?"

"Hunt through your correspondence," she said.

"I believe it," he said. "Start in the attic."

Mendy and Monica came home, trailing hundreds of dollars in overweight luggage. "What's to buy in the Caribbean?" wondered Winnie.

"Oh, I'm sure Saks is there . . . and Magnin's, too. And the poor girl's never had any money to spend foolishly."

"She hasn't any now, if she but knew," said Winnie gleefully. "She's in for a rude shock."

The happy couple did not communicate with their missing daughter; not a word, not a phone call, not a small note sent by hand. But Mabel, who visited regularly on her way home from the office, confided that Mendy hoped they would get married. "He's very conventional, my dear," she said. "*We* know it doesn't matter at all. Now, I was never married."



Winnie was shocked. "Really, Grandmother?"

"Yes, child . . . I can't think why. I don't think it was on purpose. It was a long time ago . . . I've forgotten," she said, apologetically. "But no, I never had a wedding. And I *do* love them so." She wiped away a happy tear.

They read in the papers that Leon, who had been working in the orchestra of a big radio network in New York, had been summoned before the House Un-American Activities Committee, beginning already to be called by its initials, HUAC. He refused to give names of other Party members or of contributors to the Civil Rights Congress, and was jailed for contempt of court.

"Oh, my God, J.P.," wailed Winnie. "I don't want to go to jail!"

"In this particular contretemps," said J.P., "it appears to be a badge of honor—going to jail." For already many of those summoned were beginning that humiliating crawl which was to characterize the next few evil years; that is, they were naming names, often innocent names, to prove their own loyalty.

"You're right, of course," said Winnie. "Still—I'm going to a lawyer, a civil-rights lawyer. I want to have an idea how to answer when they call me."

She was just in time, for the day after her talk with the lawyer, she was called for a private preliminary questioning; she was so full of legalities and civil-rights procedure that she completely missed the names of her inquisitioners. "Two men, rather quiet, well dressed," she said, breathlessly. "They were very polite."

"How did it go?" asked J.P. anxiously.

"I don't know," she said. "All they asked me was whether I was a Communist. I said no. Then they asked me if Leon was a Party official; I said I had no idea. When they said I must know, as I had been married to him, I replied, as coached, that I had not ever been married to him, that it was an annulled marriage, illegal and invalid. That seemed to put a stop to it all. . . . It makes no sense to me, but that's how the law works, I guess."

"That's all?" J.P. was astonished.

"That's it," said Winnie, shrugging. "Of course, it's only a preliminary hearing. The real thing, before the Committee—that's got to be much tougher."

"Did they say when they would call you?"

"Any time, I guess. It's like the sword of Damocles."

The sword never fell. Instead, one day about three weeks later, a man with a thug's face came to the studio bearing a subpoena for

Joseph P. Savage. It commanded him to appear before the Committee in Washington. "To appear for what? What am I charged with?" The thug, a U.S. marshal, had no answers, just, "Be there, buddy!"

"It can only be me!" cried Winnie. "Guilt by association . . . Oh, J.P., I'm sorry!"

"The date is next Tuesday," said J.P. "I'll have to get time off from the studio . . . and get a plane ticket. . . ."

"I'll get the tickets," said Winnie. "I'm going with you."

"Do you think you ought to? Perhaps you'd better—lie low."

"Not on your life." She was struck by a thought, suddenly. "Unless you think it'll hurt your chances . . . to be seen with me."

"I don't see why," he said. "You don't tell me how to think!"

A hurried visit to Winnie's civil-rights lawyer was productive of little, since the charges were not specific and J.P. was not and had never been a Party member. The lawyer waved aside Winnie's guilt-by-association theory as well, to her great relief. "It seems obvious to me," said the lawyer, "that you have been named as a Communist or a possible Red or Pink. Sudden fame can produce all kinds of enemies."

J.P., who had been studying the Constitution, said, "How about the Fifth Amendment? Should I take the Fifth Amendment?"

The lawyer shrugged. "Why? How can you incriminate yourself? You're not a Communist, you say."

"That's true," said J.P.

"And if you were, that in itself is not a crime you could be prosecuted for. The Communist Party is not illegal."

"I've been wondering," said J.P. slowly. "I've been wondering if, whatever question they ask—and it's sure to be an invasion of privacy—I've been wondering if I should not refuse to answer by reason of the First Amendment—that the entire proceedings are unconstitutional."

The lawyer sat up in his chair, snapping to attention; a shrewd look came into his eye. "Who have you been talking to, Mr. Savage?"

J.P. was startled. "About this? No one. No one at all . . . except Winnie—Miss Wax . . ."

"Are you sure?" The lawyer's eyes probed for a moment; then he leaned back, satisfied. A little smile came to his lips, he shook his head. "I believe you, but—it's quite a coincidence. No one has taken that line before . . . but that's going to be the defense of the Holly-

wood Ten. They decided on it as a group, under legal advisement. I'll ask you to keep this under your hat. . . ."

"Oh, yes, of course." A light came into J.P.'s eyes. "But that's great! That should do it! That ought to be the answer . . . once and for all! It is unconstitutional!"

The lawyer shook his head regretfully. "I wish it were that simple. "They're up against some pretty tough babies, you know. Crusaders . . ." He put a load of contempt into the word. "Remember how the first ones—in the Middle Ages—remember how they cleaned out Europe first? Heretics, Jews, Lollards—you name it. They took care of them before they even went near the enemy in the East." The lawyer brooded for a moment. "And more than that . . . there's politics, too. They know which side their bread's buttered on. J. Parnell Thomas and that young puppy, Nixon. It was Nixon's idea—being from California—to get you Hollywood people into it from the beginning. Makes a good show."

"More like a circus," said Winnie, bitterly. "Those hearings last spring . . . Robert Taylor, Ayn Rand, Louis B. Mayer—you'd have thought they were born with the American flag wrapped around them!"

"Louis B. Mayer . . . is he a citizen?" murmured J.P.

They laughed. The lawyer said, looking gloomy, "It's not a laughing matter, I'm afraid. A lot of people are going to get hurt."

"It's that serious, then, sir?" said J.P.

"Yes, it is. Damn serious. And I really can't advise you . . . without a better knowledge of the charges. I'm truly sorry."

J.P. rose and held out his hand. "Well, thank you anyway, sir. I guess I'll just have to play it by ear," he finished lightly.

## Chapter 7

The Hollywood Ten was a group of, in the main, screen writers who had been subpoenaed for preliminary investigations in the California court in the preceding spring. The number had originally been nineteen, all what were designated as "unfriendly witnesses"—that is, unwilling to deny their involvement in liberal causes or to accuse others

of such involvement. It had finally been reduced to ten by dint of arbitrary judgments in the prelim; these ten, including Dalton Trumbo and Ring Lardner, Jr., had been summoned to Washington for the same hearings that J.P. was bound for.

These ten people were a small, imperiled offshoot of that large number of liberals in Hollywood who felt that the scheduled HUAC hearings were a threat to the freedom of the screen; this large group called itself the Committee for the First Amendment, and had been holding open meetings since the year before. Its broad purpose was to expose the House Committee's infringement of civil rights before the public, using the cumulative prestige of its members, such as Katharine Hepburn, John Garfield, Humphrey Bogart, Fredric March, Rita Hayworth, Groucho Marx, and John Huston. Winnie had attended a couple of their later meetings, but she had not been in at the beginning, and J.P., you will remember, had been behind the walls of a Veterans Hospital.

The first thing for any subpoenaed person to realize was that the HUAC had you in a difficult position, with strictly limited choices of answering, especially if, like some of the Hollywood Ten, you were a Communist Party member.

If you were not a member, you could say so (thereby conceding the right of Congress to go into such matters), but you would next be expected to point out people who (perfectly legally) had chosen to be Communists. If you told the Congressmen it was none of their business, you faced the possibility of prosecution for contempt.

If you were a Communist and denied it under oath, you might subsequently be accused by real or synthetic informers in the Party ranks; thus, you were liable to prosecution for perjury, an even graver charge.

A very tricky choice, which had already occurred to J.P., was to decline to answer on the basis of the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination, which is what many witnesses did in the next round of hearings in 1951. However, in the years between, the leaders of the Communist Party were convicted under the Smith Act, thus rendering the Party illegal. Since this had not yet happened, taking the Fifth would be tantamount to declaring that you thought membership in the Party was a criminal act. Few of those summoned in 1947 were willing to do this; nor was J.P., when he considered it prudently.

Thus, by elimination, the policy of the Committee for the First Amendment was born. The ten Hollywood witnesses had decided to



use this policy as their defense; they would refrain from answering questions or cooperating with the HUAC in any way, on the grounds that the First Amendment made the entire investigation unconstitutional. Judicial precedents had already established that where Congress was forbidden to legislate, Congress was also forbidden to investigate. The Ten would maintain, thus, that the Committee hearings had no valid purpose. J.P. had, quite by accident, stumbled upon this course of action, and, as he traveled to Washington, he told himself that he would follow the Ten's example.

The entire proceedings were given an enormous amount of publicity; during the first week, the testimony of such "friendly" witnesses as Ronald Reagan, George Murphy, Robert Montgomery, and Robert Taylor made front-page news everywhere across the country, in every newspaper, and in every radio newscast. And at the beginning of the second and final week, when J.P.'s appearance was scheduled, the big names from the First Amendment Committee flew in to put their glamour on the other side; their pictures as spectators in the hearing room kept the whole story going.

The "friendly witnesses" had been cheerfully cooperative, showing their willingness by giving as many Communists' names as they could think of, and naming some, as well, who were not Communists at all. The entire proceedings of the first week, as reported, had all the gay abandon of a preschool-children's party. J.P. could not find his name among the accused in any newspaper lists, but he felt sure he had been named, perhaps in the preliminaries, for he could think of no other reason why he should have been subpoenaed at all. "Maybe they meant to call you last week," said Winnie. "Maybe they think you'll crawl too."

"Maybe I will," said J.P., laughing. "Except that I don't know any Communists."

They had hoped to watch the proceedings of the first day, and to see, as they hopefully expected, the Ten vindicated, but the plane, on account of fog, was delayed in the Chicago stopover, and they did not arrive until the late afternoon. The hearing room was packed with spectators (glamorous and otherwise); they pushed their way among the standees at the rear.

The room was large, hot, crowded, and noisy; there was a constant hum of voices, punctuated by sharp raps of the gavel from time to time. It was very difficult to hear either questions or answers, though they could see the prosecuting attorney, Stripling, with a sheaf of papers and a harried look, standing, and a witness, Ring Lardner, Jr.,

seated. There was a loud rap of the gavel, and they heard the voice of the Committee chairman, J. Parnell Thomas, a Republican from New Jersey. He looked angry, and he was obviously repeating the question of the prosecutor, but the words were garbled and lost amid the general confusion. The voice of Ring Lardner, Jr., however, came out loud and clear. "I could answer the way you want, Mr. Chairman, but I'd hate myself in the morning." At this, the room broke into cheers and applause, and Chairman Thomas began beating with the gavel wildly. The crowd retaliated by beating their feet on the floor; the noise seemed to rock the walls. After about five minutes of this, the chairman's voice, already hoarse, was heard, ordering the sergeant-at-arms to remove the witness forcibly from the chair.

The rest of the afternoon was bedlam; the several other witnesses could not be heard, nor could their questioners. A hush fell, finally, when it became apparent that the chairman was reading off a list of indictments, and that not one of the Ten had been spared. All were cited for contempt and indicted, to appear for sentencing at a future date not yet determined.

J.P., who up till now had given scant attention to the many injustices of a vast social system, was stunned at this flagrant example; he felt as if a band were tightening about his chest, suffocating him; sweat broke out on his forehead. A flashbulb went off in his face; he lashed out wildly, blinded, and struck a camera to the ground, hearing it break.

"Let's get out of here," he said, seizing Winnie's arm and pushing his way angrily through the slow-moving mob.

They sat down to an early dinner in the hotel dining-room; Winnie looked exhausted and a little ill. "For the first time in many months," J.P. said, "I really am dying for a drink. You have one for me."

"Are you sure it won't bother you?" asked Winnie.

"No more than I'm bothered at the moment," he said, with a wan smile. "Go ahead—you look as if you need it." He took a small pamphlet from his breast pocket and began studying it.

"What's that?" asked Winnie.

"A list of AA meetings in the Washington area," he said, not looking up. "Here—there's one right around the corner, in St. John's. I saw it as we drove up."

"They're always in churches, aren't they?"

"Mostly. The meeting's at eight—will you go with me?"

"Sure—I'd like to."

The AA meeting was in the basement; the church was very poor, on the edge of a slum, and the walls, once light green, were in need of paint. Several makeshift posters had been hung, their messages pitifully askew: the Twelve Steps of the AA doctrine and the Serenity Prayer. Folding chairs were set out in four small rows, a little crooked; a smell of brewing coffee hung in the air, tainted with cigarette smoke. The little room was nearly full; J.P. and Winnie took seats in the last row. Among the decently dressed, ordinary-looking people, Winnie noticed several derelicts, shabby and sad, with shaking hands; with a start, she realized that at least one of them was drunk! She accepted a cup of coffee, took a sip, and then saw that the meeting was getting under way, the speaker already being introduced and rising; there was a brief spatter of applause. She looked around for someplace to put her coffee cup; finding none, she slipped it under her chair, hoping she would not forget and kick it over later.

The meeting was short, its format simple, its message eloquent; there were no renegades; even the derelicts listened quietly, with the grave attention of children. Fancifully, she thought that just such an atmosphere of clarity and brotherhood must have attended the early Christians in their catacombs. When it was over, some old acquaintances stayed to gather and talk quietly in little groups, sharing coffee and cake; she filed out behind J.P.

In the street she told him, shyly, about the drunk. He nodded. "Yes," he said, "that happens. But maybe it'll stick . . . some of it. Maybe some of it will penetrate. If not this time, the next. No one is hopeless."

"You really *do* draw strength from it, don't you?" she said, looking at him. "Like Samson from his hair."

He laughed briefly and squeezed her arm. "You're funny, Winnie . . . but yes, I do. . . . I feel fine now. Let's go have our own coffee and cake."

In the morning he dressed carefully: gray flannel Brooks Brothers suit, white button-down-collared shirt, black knit tie, wing-tip shoes. "The idea," he said, knotting the tie with precision, "is not to look Hollywood." He stared at himself in the mirror, turning his head. "I'd like to get a haircut, but I'd probably get suspended by the studio. Most likely I'll be suspended anyway—after today." He laughed. "Come on," he said. "*Allons, enfants!* To victory—or death!"

## Chapter 8

At the taxi stand outside the hotel, a news vendor stood hawking his wares. J.P. heard his name; he bought a newspaper. "You've made the headlines," said Winnie, dismayed.

It was a tabloid, the early edition; across the top were the words in bold black ink, SAVAGE BREAKS CAMERA! The story described him as "Paramount's new heart-throb," and went on to tell the tale of the camera-breaking. "Among the spectators," it said, "was the notorious other camera-breaker, Katharine Hepburn, a member of the radical Hollywood set. Savage is scheduled to appear today at the final hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee. His companion is the leftist novelist Winifred Wax, daughter of Mendelssohn Wax, the film producer. Though the twice-married Miss Wax shares Savage's Beverly Hills home, she has repeatedly denied that the couple have wedding plans. Her first marriage was to Leon Goldman, a Communist Party member indicted last week for contempt of court. Her second marriage to Harrison Wells, publisher of *The Innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti*, ended in divorce."

"They're trying to tar everybody with the same brush," said Winnie, bitterly.

"It's a rag," said J.P. "What do you expect?" He dropped the paper into a trash basket and opened the door of the taxi. "I've read worse," he said, "growing up . . . the junk they used to print about my parents!"

"But this—now . . . this could hurt you!"

"No," he said, putting his arm around her, "it's meaningless . . . you'll see! Winnie—you're shaking!"

"I'm nervous," she confessed, in a small voice.

"You never used to have a nerve in your body," he chided.

"I'm older and wiser now."

"Well, stop it!" he said, giving her a little shake. "Look . . . what's the worst that can happen? I can be jailed for contempt, like Leon. It's not the end of the world . . . it's not a hanging. . . ." He turned to her, smiling a little. "An ancestor of mine was hanged, did you



know that? In Henry VIII's time. Probably for less. The world's improving, even if it doesn't always show."

The outside of the building which housed the hearing room looked like the space in front of the stands at a racetrack when a Preakness or Derby is to be run; news vendors handed out their papers like racing forms, a steady stream, while words poured out of their mouths, unheard, in another steady stream; photographers set up cameras on tripods, squinting into their view-finders, or snapped frantically, aimlessly, at the huge crowd. Police moved among it all, swinging their sticks, moving people from one place to another with no apparent pattern. A path had been cleared to the entrance, beginning at the curb; ropes defined it, and more policemen roamed inside it, threatening the crowd which pressed in from either side. As J.P. and Winnie stepped from the cab, two large young officers hurried up, taking up positions beside each of J.P.'s arms. One of them snapped his finger. "Two more here for the lady," he called; they appeared, almost running. One cop took J.P.'s arm. "Wait a minute," said J.P., drawing back. "I'm not under arrest!"

"Pipe down, Buddy, it's for your own good," the cop snarled good-humoredly. "That crowd'll tear you apart. Flank the little lady!" he called over his shoulder. "Let's go!"

As they began the short walk, wails and shrieks rose from the sidelines, the banshee noise of J.P.'s fans. It swelled, as they passed, to a pitch of frenzy; Winnie saw one of her policemen stuff his fingers into his ears. Through it could be heard kissing noises, sobs, and one voice which cried over and over on a high, thin note, "Look at me, J.P.! Oh, look at me!" Involuntarily he turned, to see a blur of faces; a hand brushed his shoulder; they were through, and the door was opening.

"Whew!" said J.P., inside. "It's like running the gauntlet."

One of the cops grinned and said, "The price of fame, Buddy," and shook his head.

They gave their names and were escorted to the witnesses' section. The big room was still nearly empty; a group of ladies of indeterminate age sat together in the rear of the spectators' area, whispering and passing around candy; a few were knitting. There was a kind of raised rostrum across the room, obviously for the chairman, aides, and prosecuting counsel; it, too, was empty. Clerks came and went mysteriously, laying down sheafs of paper on the rostrum, picking others up, disappearing.

"I guess we're early," said Winnie in a small voice.

"No, that's all right. You folks sit down." One of the clerks, looking important; he could not have been more than twenty. "They haven't let the press in yet . . . or opened the doors to the public. Mr. Thomas is in the lavatory," he added, gratuitously.

J.P. gestured to the ladies in the rear, raising his eyebrows inquiringly.

"Oh, them," the clerk said. "They're regulars." He saluted as if they were generals, and he, too, disappeared.

"I'm going to get the giggles," warned Winnie. "Do you suppose we can smoke?"

"Why not?" said J.P., offering her his pack. They lit up, and immediately, from nowhere, another clerk appeared, banging down a large ashtray. Winnie looked at J.P., widening her eyes; there were ashtrays at intervals of less than a foot all along the table in front of them; she shrugged, blowing out smoke on a sigh.

They watched the unhurried clerks' progress to and fro. From the ladies' group, the "regulars," came occasional stage whispers, loud in the emptiness: "Effie, got your aspirins?" ". . . need a permanent, just haven't had a minute!" ". . . pretty! Yellow is nice . . . it'll do for a boy or a girl." The chairman, J. Parnell Thomas, came in, ruffling through the papers on his desk; they recognized him from the day before, portly, with a jovial face, frowning now; he looked like a used-car salesman. Like truant schoolboys, others drifted in to take their places at the rostrum; Robert Stripling, the prosecuting counsel, neat-featured with eyes that were ringed with dark, yellowish-brown circles, like those of an Indian, or a chronic liver sufferer; Congressman Nixon of California, very young and slight, dark and self-conscious; several others that they did not recognize.

Winnie stubbed out her cigarette. As if at a signal, the room began to fill up behind them; the press people started to push toward their section; spectators stampeded wildly for seats. They saw cameras being set up in all corners, microphones placed strategically; one was set before J.P., along with a fresh ashtray. (The one with the lone stub was whisked away. "Just like Mabel," whispered Winnie.) The gavel began its pounding, and continued for five minutes before the shuffling of feet, clearing of throats, and coughing died down. Chairman Thomas then cleared his own throat, loudly, nodded to Stripling, and the questioning began. The opening questions were standard: what was his name, where was he born, when, what was his occupation, and so on.

MR. STRIPLING: Mr. Savage, are you a Communist?

J. P. (*levelly*): No. I'm a Democrat.

Titters arose from behind him, and a little wave of laughter; the gavel banged.

MR. STRIPLING (*sternly*): You are not here to make jokes, Mr. Savage.

J. P.: I was not aware that I was.

(*A question from another place at the rostrum.*)

MR. NIXON (*earnestly*): Will you swear that statement to be true?

J. P.: That I am a Democrat?

MR. NIXON (*testily*): No. That you are not a Communist.

J. P.: I never swear (*laughter, rapping of the gavel*), but I certainly—

J. PARNELL THOMAS (*gavel*): Just a moment, witness! (*Turning to Counsel*) Was the oath administered?

Several Committee members jumped up, heads together, rustling papers.

MR. STRIPLING: Oath was not administered, sir.

CHAIRMAN: Please see to it, sir. (*Shuffling papers.*)

Snapping of fingers by Stripling, and the clerk appeared, red-faced, before J.P., garbling the words of the oath. J.P. repeated the words clearly in his actor's voice, reaching all the corners of the room. ". . . so help me God." There was a murmur and one loud clap of applause; the gavel sounded again.

MR. NIXON (*uneasily*): Now, Mr. Savage—under oath, are you a Communist?

J. P.: No.

MR. NIXON: Have you ever been a Communist?

J. P.: No.

MR. NIXON: Have you ever contributed to the Communist Party funds?

J. P.: No.

MR. NIXON: Did you not play a benefit performance (*consulting papers*) on November 18, 1941, at the Cort Theatre?

J. P.: Probably. I can't swear to it. Most plays have benefits. I was playing at the Cort at that time.

MR. NIXON (*reading from the paper*): This performance of November 18, 1941, was for the benefit of Russian War Relief. Are you aware of this?

J. P.: No. But it's quite possible. Either that or Bundles for Britain, in those days.

MR. NIXON (*angry*): It was Russian War Relief! (*Hitting his paper.*) I have documented proof!

J. P.: Then I am now aware of it. Thank you, sir.

MR. NIXON (*reading*): April 23, 1942, the Cort Theatre, benefit for Russian War Relief. (*Sarcastically.*) Perhaps you now remember *this* benefit?

J. P.: No.

MR. NIXON: You don't remember?

J. P.: I did not appear at that time.

MR. NIXON (*sweeping the audience with a triumphant look*): Why? Did you have a change of heart?

J. P.: You might say that. (*Quietly.*) I was in the United States Army, stationed in Camp Ellerton, Arkansas, at that time. (*A long ripple of laughter and a spatter of applause.*)

MR. NIXON (*after a pause*): But you *did* play the November benefit?

J. P.: Yes. I was under contract to play at that time.

MR. NIXON (*pouncing*): Then you *did* contribute to the Communist Party!

J. P.: No. They are not the same. The benefit was for a wartime ally, not a political party. (*Applause; loud raps of the gavel.*)

CHAIRMAN: That will do, Mr. Nixon. Now, Mr. Savage. Under oath, were you happy to contribute to this . . . ally?

J. P.: Truthfully, sir, no. No actor likes to play benefits. The audience is restless and bored—(*Gavel-rapping.*)

CHAIRMAN (*annoyed*): Aside from the audience, sir—answer the question! Were you pleased to contribute to this cause?

J. P.: I'm afraid I did not think about it one way or another. Benefits were a contractual obligation.

They worried this at length; Winnie's watch said fifteen minutes before they switched the questioning, having established nothing conclusive.

MR. STRIPLING: Since you are not, as you have stated, a Communist, are you willing to give the names of Communists of your acquaintance?

J. P.: Perfectly willing. (*Sighs from the audience.*) Except that, unfortunately, I don't know any. (*Laughter.*)

MR. STRIPLING: Oh, come now, Mr. Savage—(*laughing casually*) we all know a few Communists.



J. P. (*firmly*): I have not, at any time, heard anyone, living or dead, state in my presence his or her affiliation with the Communist Party.

MR. STRIPLING (*with a dismissive gesture*): Leave that for a moment. I put it to you that you do in fact know several people whom you believe to be Communists, who may, in fact, *be* Communists.

J. P. (*firmly*): I must not speculate upon the ideas of others.

CHAIRMAN (*interceding*): Must not, Mr. Savage? Those words are not acceptable to this Committee. You may, if you like, *refuse* to speculate, as you put it.

J. P.: I do so refuse, sir.

CHAIRMAN: On what grounds?

J. P.: On the grounds that it is none of my business. (*Laughter and applause.*) I would also refuse to speculate on whether people vote Democratic . . . or Republican. The ballot is still secret in this country, I believe. (*Loud applause and equally loud gavel-rapping.*)

MR. NIXON (*consulting papers*): I have here a list of names. (*Reading.*) Charles Chaplin, Paul Robeson, Melvyn Douglas, Lionel Stander, Karen Morley. Do you deny that you have ever *heard* that one or more of these persons is a Communist?

J. P.: Certainly I deny it. It is not the kind of gossip I find interesting. (*A loud burst of laughter.*)

MR. NIXON (*visibly annoyed*): I am not talking about gossip. Have you heard allegations to this effect?

J. P.: No.

MR. NIXON: Have you ever heard any of these persons express sympathy with Communism or with Russia?

J. P.: I do not know any of them.

MR. NIXON (*quickly scanning the paper*): Not Karen Morley?

J. P.: No. I do not know the lady.

MR. NIXON (*reading aloud*): "At the party for Paul Robeson I saw many members of the Hollywood cell, among them Karen Morley, with Joseph Savage. . . ." This is from the sworn testimony of Bert Andell. Now, do you still deny familiarity with Karen Morley?

J. P.: I do. Also, I do not know the man who gave the testimony.

MR. NIXON: Bert Andell is a writer who worked on the screenplay of your last picture. (*Giving the picture's name.*)

J. P.: There were thirty-two writers on that particular film. I do not

know any of them, though I met the author of the book briefly. May I hear the date of the party I supposedly attended, the party for Paul Robeson?

MR. NIXON (*reading*): May 27, 1945.

J. P.: I was in hospital at Perry Point, Maryland, on that date. I was still in the service. (*Applause.*)

CHAIRMAN (*pounding the gavel*): Will you be done with this line of questioning, Mr. Nixon! It is not to the point! Mr. Stripling, continue!

MR. STRIPLING (*reading*): Mr. Savage, you attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pennsylvania, did you not?

J. P.: Yes, I did.

MR. STRIPLING: While you were there, did you attend any meetings of the United Mine Workers local?

J. P. (*visibly startled*): No. I am not a member. (*Loud laughter.*)

MR. STRIPLING: Did you join the picket line?

J. P.: No.

MR. STRIPLING: Did you attend rallies supporting the workers?

J. P.: No.

MR. STRIPLING: Did you join protest marches for the Japanese boycott?

J. P.: No.

MR. STRIPLING (*with a cunning look*): Mr. Savage, under oath, during your college years, did you at any time wear lisle stockings? (*Ripplings of interest.*)

J. P. (*turning to the Chairman*): Mr. Chairman, I have never in my life worn stockings of any kind! (*Whoops of laughter, gavel.*)

MR. STRIPLING (*quickly*): I amend that. Hose! Did you wear lisle hose?

J. P.: I am not sure what lisle is. It being cold in Pennsylvania, I presume I wore wool socks or regulation cotton athletic socks when required.

MR. STRIPLING: Did you wear silk hose?

J. P.: No. I am allergic to silk. (*Laughter.*)

MR. STRIPLING: I repeat, you are not here to make jokes.

J. P.: I assure you it is no joke. My feet swell up like balloons and— (*Gusts of laughter drown out his last words; the gavel raps repeatedly.*)

CHAIRMAN (*sternly*): Mr. Stripling, finish this line of questioning!

MR. STRIPLING: I put it to you that you refused to wear silk in order, like other radicals, to boycott Japan!

J. P. (*quietly*): No, sir. My war with Japan came later, in the Pacific.

MR. STRIPLING (*sarcastically*): Did you receive any medals in this war?

J. P.: Only one.

MR. STRIPLING (*truculently*): What was that, may I ask?

J. P. (*quietly*): The Purple Heart. (*At this the crowd goes wild, applauding and beating heels on the floor; the gavel is pounded fiercely.*)

CHAIRMAN: Counsel, will you please proceed to a pertinent line of questioning?

(*A shout from the rear, in an unknown voice, "There's no such thing—this is a farcel!"*)

CHAIRMAN (*angrily pounding*): I will have order in this hearing-room! Counsel, proceed! (*Several heads together at the rostrum; papers, etc.*)

MR. NIXON: Mr. Chairman, do I have the floor?

CHAIRMAN: Proceed, Mr. Nixon.

MR. NIXON: Mr. Savage, did you appear in a picture called (*refers to paper*) *Hero's Walk*?

J. P.: Yes, it was my first film.

MR. NIXON: Under oath, Mr. Savage, does the "hero" in the title refer to a Russian?

J. P.: Yes, but the title is ironic; his walk is to the place of execution.

MR. NIXON (*testily*): Never mind that. Did you in fact play this part, this Russian?

J. P.: I did, yes.

MR. NIXON: Would you consider this a—sympathetic part?

J. P.: Not exactly. It was an *interesting* part . . . the character was complex.

MR. NIXON (*cunningly*): But not sympathetic?

J. P.: Not entirely; there were other sides to his personality.

MR. NIXON: But you *played* him for sympathy, did you not?

J. P. (*offended*): Certainly not! I played what I felt to be the truth of the character . . . to the best of my ability.

MR. NIXON: I quote from a review in the *Los Angeles Times*. (*Reading.*) "Young Joseph Savage is superb. One longs to follow him anywhere; to Russia, to the moon, or even to the firing squad!" (*With triumphant smile.*) How can you say you did not play him for sympathy when a reviewer wishes to follow him to Russia?

J. P. (*smiling for the first time*): I think it is a figure of speech. I

remember the review. Like most of the others, it had to look very hard for something good in that picture. (*Laughter.*)

MR. NIXON: Oh, I see. Then you think it was a bad picture?

J. P. (*smiling*): Yes, I do. (*More laughter.*)

MR. NIXON: Was that because the hero was a Russian?

J. P.: The hero could have been a Hottentot . . . the picture was a stinker! (*Loud laughter and much applause.*)

MR. NIXON: If it had been a Hottentot, Mr. Savage, would you have preferred it?

J. P.: It would have taken a good deal of research, since I don't know of any good material on Hottentots. For Russians we have always the example of the characters of Chekhov, Turgenev, Tolstoy. This picture, for instance, was imitation Tolstoy, derived from a character in *War and Peace*, but poorly defined. By studying the Tolstoy epic, I was able to glean more insight into . . . (*Pounding of the gavel.*)

CHAIRMAN: This dissertation is not to the point!

J. P. (*smiling*): I apologize for boring you, sir. (*Wild applause and cheers—shouts of "Stick to it, Savage!"*)

CHAIRMAN (*rapping with gavel*): Mr. Nixon, have you finished?

MR. NIXON: Sir, I want time to establish sympathy for Russia—

CHAIRMAN: You have had it, sir! More than time enough! As Mr. Savage said—the picture was a stinker. (*Loud laughter, catcalls.*) Counsel, proceed to next line of questioning.

MR. STRIPLING (*flustered*): Sir, the prosecution rests.

CHAIRMAN (*rapping with gavel*): Case is dismissed. Court is recessed for lunch.

Wild cheering broke out all over the room; in the press section, reporters surged forward, to be stopped by a police line. There was the lightning of flashbulbs, a babble of voices, shouts, and cheers. Winnie murmured, "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Not here," said J. P. "Get up and walk . . . fast." He took her arm firmly, raised her, and walked her past the police line, past the surging crowd, and out the door. Outside, they stopped, greeted by the same wild wailing and shrieking as before. "Duck your head and go!" he said. "Run for the curb!"

They got through, finally, with the help of the police, though Winnie had an ice-cream cone thrust against her new beige suit, and J. P. had a smear of lipstick, like fresh blood, on his ear, but there was no taxi to be seen. A police car drove up, its siren clanging. "Get



in," said the cop behind the wheel. The car pulled out with a screech of wheels, missing a fan by inches. "Where to, Buddy?"

J.P. named the hotel. Winnie collapsed against him in the back seat. "We ought," she said, weakly, "to go to a Justice of the Peace." J.P. turned to stare at her. "Do you mean it, Winnie?" "Yes," she said meekly. "I always wanted to marry a hero. . . ."

# EPILOGUE



London, 1978

It is London's West End, and, like the Broadway area in New York, houses, within a radius of a few crowded blocks, the top theatrical offerings of the English-speaking stage. Every night the lobbies are crowded with people, spilling out through the heavy, old-fashioned doors onto the narrow sidewalks; at some box offices, patient queues line up, often stretching around the corners into the next street; the big, square-built London cabs squeak miraculously past each other, too big for the old streets and alleyways, blocking traffic. Cheeky Cockney voices wrangle good-humoredly, vying for places, discharging passengers under the glittering marquees. For it is the start of a new fall season, and it promises to be a good one.

One of the marquees, no more glittering than the others, but extravagantly loaded with a dazzle of names, is the one over the theater which is presenting the first solid dramatic hit of the year, fresh from a long-run triumph in New York; the name of the play is familiar, Anton Chekov's *The Sea Gull*. Here can be seen on one stage three generations of the now-fabled Savage family.

Each of these generations has its star, billed above the name of the play. On the theater front, the place of most prominence, and in larger letters, brightly lit, one can read SOLANGE SAVAGE. She is seventy-eight, just the age of the century. On one side front, the side nearest to the hub of things, is the name of Joseph Savage, her son, familiarly known to fans on both sides of the Atlantic as J.P. Around the corner on the opposite, third side, which faces the dimmer haunts of Soho, is Melissa's name; Melissa Savage, J.P.'s daughter, Solange's granddaughter, and the youngest of the acting Savages. Melissa does not mind that her name looks out upon basement coffee houses, fish-and-chip stands, and the odd Indian sari store; it is in lights for the first time, a thrilling sight, and she knows that as yet she is the least of all the famous Savages. She is twenty-eight, looks eighteen, and is playing that plum of ingenue roles, the self-styled "sea gull" of the title, Nina.

Solange, of course, plays Madame Arcadina, the aging actress; though in reality she is far too old for the part, she gets away with it and, indeed, it is her greatest triumph. Age has not blurred Solange's

outlines; it has refined them. She is thinner than she has ever been, and her face is stripped, tautly, to its beautiful bones; the face-lift, which she guards so secretly, was hardly needed. Over her famous auburn hair, still only streaked with gray, she wears a shocking flame-red wig, fancifully curled in the style of the play's period. Her costumes, too, are fanciful, each one more outrageous than the other: bold purples and oranges, warring; foaming silver lace, stiff brocades, a golden train. They astonish the eye, blazing upon the thin, tautened body as it moves, feral, pacing, about the stage. It is a brilliant performance; Arcadina devours life; in the character, Solange stalks it like a wild animal.

Her son, J.P., plays Trigorin, her lover, who, in a casual moment of boredom in the country, seduces Nina and then abandons her. It is a daring piece of casting; in a theater where, now, anything goes, we still have not had the wicked whisper of offstage incest; aside from everything else, the foolish whispering has been good box office, though the production hardly needs any such boost. As Trigorin, J.P. is delightful; here we remember that Chekov's plays are comedies, sad though they may be around the edges. He is vain, mannered, languishing, and temperamental; he affects a Byronic look—curly mane of hair, flowing tie, romantically collared white shirt; his handsome, hero's face looks as if it were made of wax and had begun, a little, to melt; he exudes a magnificent seediness. It is he, also, who has directed the play; Solange's performance owes much to him, and his young daughter's even more. Her scenes with her young husband, who plays Constantine, are sheer poetry, and alone, despairing, she can shake your heart.

Yes, there are two more Savages who must be counted, though they are only Savages by marriage. There is Winnie, married to J.P., who has done the adaptation, very fresh and new, and there is Melissa's husband, already popular on both stage and screen, a clever young actor, Meredith Jones. So it is truly a family affair, this play. The only Savage who is missing is Melissa's younger brother, Mordecai. He is "off somewhere learning to be a guru," as his mother, Winnie, puts it. Hot words rush to Melissa's lips; then she remembers she is a Transcendental Meditator too, and tranquil now, so she holds her tongue. Mordecai is in Switzerland, with the Maharishi, on an advanced TM course, along with some hundred others, mostly as young. He has remembered, though, to send a telegram opening night, and that is something, at least. To be sure, it read, "JAI CURU DEV," for in his fervor he can only think Sanskrit; it



arrived on time, though, before the curtain went up; which proves, as J.P. said, that young Mordecai is a Savage at heart.

But the play is a hit, a smash, an unparalleled triumph; they are all so happy. Earlier, they stood in the street together, before the opening, and watched the names go up in lights. Solange sighed, and blinked back tears; the young couple held hands, breathless and giggling; J.P. smiled and turned to look at Winnie. She said, solemnly, "It's been a long, hard road."

"It certainly has," said Melissa, with a kind of awe. "More than five centuries." For she, more than any of the rest of them, is eagerly aware of the Savage roots (having read Alex Haley's best-seller, as Winnie rather snidely supposes). But Winnie does not mean that; she is not thinking of history. She is remembering the last thirty years; the "parlous times," as she calls them.

For they have had their ups and downs, more down than up, in these decades. Oh, they have had enough to eat, for everything is relative, and they have had various roofs over their heads, though sometimes they have been behind in the rent. They have crossed the ocean several times, and not for fun; they have pulled up stakes and gone where the living was, and sometimes they have moved under a cloud. After the HUAC hearings, they were, for a bit, hard put to it to make ends meet.

Though J.P. had emerged from his inquisition a hero to Winnie, and to some of the more liberal members of the press, there were many people who thought his clear, carefully chosen answers were not courageous, but foolhardy. Though his case was dismissed, it was not forgotten. As if on cue, with indictments of the Hollywood Ten, the Hollywood blacklist was born. Anyone named as a Communist, however tentatively, by the so-called "friendly witnesses" was automatically put on the list; many thoroughly innocent actors lost their jobs, some never to work again. It was a scurrilous time; a hint, a rumor, could ruin a career, even a life.

J.P. had obtained leave from the studio to appear at the hearings; he had been assured, verbally, that, whatever the outcome, they would wait and finish the picture with him. Alas, they did not put it in writing; while he was still in the Washington hotel, still elated by his victory in the House Committee room, his agent called to say that the picture was off; they would reshoot his scenes with a replacement. "But I have a contract!" cried J.P. into the telephone. "No dice," replied the agent gloomily. And he quoted the clause, a loophole in fine print, which made the dismissal perfectly legal. "You

haven't a leg to stand on, my boy," he went on, "unless you want to sue . . . and that takes a lot of money. And years . . ." J.P., stunned, agreed that suing was not the answer, and the agent hung up, promising to scout around and find him another part.

After two months it was apparent that J.P., too, would not work again in Hollywood for a long time, until, in fact, the climate of fear disappeared. The couple, for they were married by then, decided to try their luck in Rome, with Solange and Aristide. It was a good move, as it happened, though it did not make their fortunes; far from it. Others, too, refugees from Hollywood, were trying it; it was a home away from home. Coincidentally, it was found that pictures were easier and cheaper to make there, in Italy; there were no union problems, there was a great deal of postwar frozen money available, and the natural scenery, the exquisite architecture, the ancient ruins made magnificent backgrounds. J.P. made more than a dozen pictures there in the space of five or six years, many of them released in America, and two of them runners-up at the Cannes Film Festival. His two children were born in Italy, Melissa on location not two miles from the Florence of the long-dead Saviggi troupe, and Mordecai in a small rented villa on the banks of the Tiber.

Winnie's work did not suffer; as she remarked, "writing is for anywhere." Of course, she was blacklisted, too, and never did another Hollywood screenplay, though, unaccountably, she, the inveterate joiner, was never called to answer for her youthful sins; she was even a little miffed, as though she had been left out of something, and J.P. teased her about it. "Be glad, my girl," he quipped. "Anonymity is beautiful." She sent him a baleful glance and did not answer. He had meant it kindly, and was even giving it a double meaning, as of Alcoholics Anonymous. As to that, in fact, in all those thirty years J.P. had only one slip, New Year's Eve, 1955, in New York, and that a minor one, and he conquered it, with the help of Winnie and the aforementioned AA. A very pretty record, as any alcoholic will tell you.

Winnie wrote a novel about an actor caught up in the HUAC hearings; it enjoyed a certain success in England, where, with typical British understatement, the subject was found "interesting," but it was not published in America until the House Committee's dispersal and McCarthy's ignominious ease-out, in the fifties. Over the years, though, Winifred Wax became a name to be reckoned with in literary circles, though her books, already labeled "thoughtful," did not sell more than moderately well. She won the National Book Award

one year and the Pulitzer another, and in the last few years the book clubs have been taking her, so she made money, too; but by then the bad years were past. Her one play, tried out in summer stock, was a disaster; this adaptation of Chekov is her first dramatic success, and perhaps—who knows?—there will be others; she is still not past her prime.

Solange's first Italian film, *Annie Spragg*, nearly won her an Oscar. But a miss is as good as a mile, as she said sadly, and she never did win it in all her long career. When Aristide died, she retired once more, almost penniless; she had as income only the rental from her Beverly Hills property, for she would never sell it. "I want to be buried next to Sammy," she said inconsequently and inaccurately, for in fact Sammy was cremated.

In "the Italian years," as they called them, the Savages were together again, young and old crowded into cramped quarters in Rome, much as the first English emigrants lived in each other's pockets in the long-gone Florentine days. Solange, idle and grandmotherly for the first time, in the company of little Melissa and Mordecai, searched out the ancient graveyard where the bones of the first Saviggis rested, along with the remains of eighteenth-century Miranda and her Beau. Much of it was rubble, overgrown with long grasses, and the stones were covered with moss, the names almost obliterated. But under a willow tree, somewhat apart, stood a single small monument, almost intact. It read still, "To the beloved memory of my dear wife, Miranda Savage, incomparable artist." The words were in English, in the curly, flowing script of that day; the marble of the stone was green with mold. Among the rubble of rocks and tumbled stones, a few names could be traced out: *Ricardo*, *Eleonora*, and, on a larger shard, part of an angel's wing and *Thomasina Bellissima*. Of the Saviggi villa that had once stood near, not a trace remained; the bombs of two wars had demolished it, though an old grandfather, toothless, at a neighboring inn, swore, in his soft, slurred Tuscan, that he remembered it well.

After a few years, almost but not quite prosperous years, the American-made films came more and more slowly; the "frozen" money finally began to give out; the expatriate colony in Rome broke up and drifted away. J.P. made one more picture, for an Italian company; it was an unfortunate choice, Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. The cast, except for two English actors and J.P., was all Italian, and the English was dubbed in; they had not yet learned to do this well, and the synchronization was dreadful. Though it really did not matter,

for, except for a fleeting moment here and there, everything about the picture was equally dreadful; it was never even released in America, the market for which it was intended, and played in Italian in the smaller cities to catcalls and jeers.

They had the fare, just (there were so many of them now), to New York, and little left over, but they decided to sail home, in the winter of 1954. In New York, fortune smiled again, a prissy, niggardly little smile but enough to see them through for a while. Winnie got an advance on a new book, substantial; J.P. got an off-Broadway production of *Coriolanus* (thanking his stars that no one had seen the film), which was a hit and came uptown to a Broadway theater; Solange, out of the blue, was offered a part in a daytime television serial. She came out of retirement once more to accept, just to "help out," as she said. As usual, there was an apartment shortage in the city; for weeks much of their salaries went on hotel bills. At last Winnie, despairing, ventured into lower Manhattan; she found, in a dark little side street not far from the waterfront, an old, old building, almost a shell, but with beautiful lines, long and low, that had once been some civic structure; the date over the still-intact double doors read "1811." They rented it for a pittance, put in rudimentary plumbing, and moved in. They lived in it for a year, in gaslight, with only the heat from its many fireplaces, while they pitched in, like enthusiastic children, repairing floors and ceilings, shoring up crumbling walls, furnishing it from odds and ends out of thrift shops and junk stores. It has been their real home for years now, and they bought it, finally; today it is a showplace, a landmark, and their pride. Oddly enough, it is not far from Trinity Church and the site of the old Nassau Street Theatre, more Savage roots. "History," as Winnie said, "has a way of repeating itself."

J.P., in those years, realized his dream of acting on the stage; indeed, only a few remember that he ever made films. He played Broadway, went on tour, appeared in summer stock; at Stratford he did two seasons of Shakespeare (his bad knee notwithstanding), the Hamlet in Edwardian dress. He is no Olivier, but he is considered one of America's finest actors, and twice he has won the Critics' Circle Award. Oddly enough, with his looks, he has not done much television; he does not like the medium, quoting Mae West, who remarked that "only a fool would wish to appear smaller than life!"

Solange, on the other hand, has made a new career in the TV studios playing dowagers, wicked crones, and well-preserved grandmothers, with an occasional foray into summer stock.



Melissa, too, played stock now and then, when she was growing up, though the fashion for child parts was already passing. It got her an Equity card and admission to the Professional Children's School. From there she went to London, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and the arms of the young Meredith Jones, who became her husband.

Mordecai is musical, like his mother, and the image of Winnie, too, when she was young; he is skinny and clever, with boundless vitality. At the same fancy New Hampshire prep school that his father had attended, he learned to smoke pot; later, in the rock group he founded, called Mordecai's Vision, he discovered more potent euphorias—a bit of heroin now and then, some sniffs of cocaine, and the occasional LSD trip. But only Melissa knows this; his parents are still the same innocents who fought the alcohol blues.

It was Melissa, too, who first heard the lectures, in London, of Maharishi Mahash Yogi, adored the joyous little Indian with the lilted voice and the happy message, learned for herself the Transcendental Meditation technique, and wrote to Mordecai. It changed her brother's life, for to meditate one must not take drugs at all, even the gentle grass. So Mordecai was saved from addiction, except possibly to TM itself; he is on his third advanced course now, and each has lasted six months, and each time he announces that he is "leaving the world." J.P. says it is a phase, that he will get over it, and perhaps he is right. For once, in between, Mordecai made a gold-label record, and another time some guest appearances on television as a new comedian, with a fresh and irrepressibly funny act, curiously innocent and joyful; Johnny Carson, introducing him, called it "white comedy."

The children, though their earliest memories are of Italy, did their growing up in the New York of the Sixties, the war in Vietnam a TV reality in front of their young eyes, and a specter at their heels. Mordecai, at twelve, with a bullhorn in Bryant Park, raised over a thousand dollars in an afternoon for the moratorium, while Melissa gave lessons in the burning of draft cards. The offspring of old-time liberals, they never played "cops and robbers"; for them, it was "cops and demonstrators."

Winnie remembers still the great peace march through the streets of midtown Manhattan; like a Children's Crusade it was, but superbly vocal. She was conferring with an editor in her publisher's Madison Avenue office; they heard the chant from afar, and the tramp of thousands of marching feet, coming nearer. She flew to the

window, for it was only four flights up, and looked down upon a sea of youthful heads, seeing, with a shock, the long, red ironed-straight hair of her fourteen-year-old Melissa, who was wearing an ankle-length, granny dress, and had bare feet; she heard, with a greater shock, she, that early radical, the words of the chant, like innocent, rhythmic thunder: "One, two, three, four . . . we don't want your fucking war! One, two, three, four . . ."

They are part of the generation called "lost," as the generation of Sassoon and Alan Seeger was once called. But they are not lost, any more than that other generation was; they are casual, "cool," and, to their parents' eyes, illiterate; Melissa reads only plays, and Mordecai only theology. "They are so *cynical*," Winnie once complained. "We were never cynical."

"We were," said Solange, a little smugly. For she relates to them, the children; is thick as thieves with them, as a matter of fact. She would have marched along with Melissa, except that she had a television show, and now she has learned to meditate, doing it religiously twice a day, and reading all the TM literature. For she has learned, Solange, that Hindus, of whom Maharishi is one, embrace reincarnation, and she has, at seventy-eight, intimations of mortality. But Winnie, who was never cynical, does not think of that, but marvels at Solange's understanding.

No, it is they, the red-hot liberals, the old-young middle-aged, J.P. and Winnie, who do not understand their children; it is the Great Gap which was once between J.P. and Sammy, between Winnie and Mendy. It narrowed gradually, and will go, finally, as it did for them. Sammy, so long dead, is remembered fondly, and Mendy, who died in the fifties, the year after Monica left him, is forgiven, at last.

Mendy died intestate; it was the only heritage he could give to his daughter. He was bankrupt, and owed vast sums to a government he had discreetly cheated for years; still owes them, in fact, for his huge studio holdings and personal properties were sold at auction, but could not cover his debts. Among his papers was a sad, fond, little note to Winnie, explaining that now, at least, since he did not name her as heir, she could never be prosecuted for his back taxes.

Monica, a failed actress, has yet had some success; she has sued for her fourth divorce and her fourth large settlement. Moreover, she has written a book telling all, published by one of the more disreputable firms; it is just out, and already on the best-seller list. Winnie, dipping into it, cried, "You're in it, J.P.! She tells about the tweed trousers!" But J.P., puzzled, has long ago forgotten his youthful vanities.

Mabel, sweet, giddy, kind-hearted Mabel, has been their angel. She died only recently, at a very great age, leaving a small fortune to her granddaughter, Winnie; Mordecai's house to her beloved Sammy's son, J.P.; and ten thousand dollars to each of the children. Were it not for the recession, the Savages would almost be rich again!

Mabel's money made the down payment on their historic New York dwelling, and backed, in part, this Chekhov production; none of the Savages are savers. Mordecai has used his patrimony for his TM courses; there is not much left, for his bliss, as he calls it, is expensive. Melissa, too, has spent most of hers already, but that is a longer story.

Some few years ago, as a student at the RADA, she began to search for the old family theater, for there was a rumor that it was still standing, after two wars. Unfamiliar with London, she did not even know where to look; it was not until she met Meredith that they began the long hunt in earnest. For, besides being in love with her, he was also in love with her history. Like all young actors who have fought their way into the ranks of the theater, he longed to have been born in a trunk. After many false leads, many exhausting, dusty ferretings in old buildings, after advertising in the newspapers, they found it, finally. It stands, derelict but almost intact, within another, larger structure, in a tiny cul-de-sac not far from the great, glittering stages of the West End.

They came upon it quite by accident. A young couple of their acquaintance, having gone into publicity work, had rented the cheapest offices they could find, the top floor of this very same building. Below them was a tacky little costumer, and the first two floors were closed off, the entrances boarded up. One night Melissa and Meredith went there, to their friends', for a party. As they passed the boarded-up area, Melissa noticed a loose plank; she pulled and it came away; in the dim dark behind it she caught a glimpse of something that looked like the façade of a small theater. "Probably some old scenery," said their friends. "Yes, I think it's just storage space."

But, intrepid, they came back in daylight, ripped away the remaining boards, risking arrest, and found what was left of the old Agincourt Field. After consultations with real-estate men, litigations, title searches, and all the rest, a process which has taken two full years, they have put the down payment on it, finally. It is their fond plan to restore it to its former minuscule glory and to act in it, under one of London's club-theater licenses.

They have taken the first steps; they have got rid of the other tenants, their friends included, for they can both be cruel when their minds are made up; they have pulled down the walls of the outer building, an expensive undertaking, with union help, which has taken quite all of their ready money. The rest of it they will do gradually; they have all the time in the world, they are still so young.

Nearly every day they explore; it is the most exciting thing that has ever happened to them. Once they found scenery, faded, tiny, used perhaps for puppet shows, and a pair of little curtains, folded away with their rope and pulley. There were old, old costumes in a battered trunk, mysterious garments, tinsel, that fell apart at a touch. The greatest find of all was a japanned box, locked, without a key; no locksmith could find a way into it; it had to be broken apart. Inside were old documents wrapped in oiled silk, a deed, some bills of sale, in crabbed handwriting and fading ink, and an ancient parchment with a royal seal, the deeded gift of Henry V. There are pictures, too, sketches and watercolors, a miniature on ivory. They know who they must be, these images, the Saviggis of that other remote day, but they are reverent. They do not dare to handle them, and take them to the British Museum, for such relics should have the best of care, and the preservation of the expert hand.

Today they have gone down into the cellars, the oldest part. The stone of the steps is worn away in hollows in the middle, for many have walked here. The smell is heavy and choking, like a dungeon, but with the door open the fresh air rushes in and they can stand it. It seems to be mostly scenery here, leaning against the walls, but they cannot see very much, for they have only the light of two lanterns and a flashlight. Melissa, caught by a small brightness, picks something up; it is dusty and quite heavy, the size of a small poster. "It looks like a sign of some sort," she says, "but this light—" And she hands it to Meredith.

"It's old tin, I think," he says. "Let's take it into the daylight."

They go upstairs to examine it in the clear light from the street. It is the old, old sign from when the place was first an inn, but they do not know that; when they have rubbed it as clean as they can, they see the outline of the ill-drawn smiling panther; the writing beneath it has all faded away. "It's 'Ye Olde Beastie'!" cries Melissa, delighted.

She is gazing, though she does not know it, at the only image of her first ancestor, Moll Savage; for the sign was made in honor of the nickname King Harry had given her, his onetime mistress; he had



called her, always, his "black panther." And so the latest of the Savages looks upon the first, and we have come full circle in the history.

And so we leave them—Moll and her gallant little Sir Hercules, and all their children and grandchildren; the wonderful Beau who went to his death with a song and a smile; moody, brilliant Edward and his adorable Thomasine, with the Italian Saviggis that came after; the other Beau, Washington's spy, and the incandescent genius that was Miranda. We leave, too, Spotless Sam, the world's beloved clown, and the young Solange. And we say goodbye to the Savages that are left, triumphant: Solange in her latter greatness, J.P., and pretty, tall, red-haired Melissa, at the beginning of her career.

For the story must end somewhere. . . .

## Sources

A complete bibliography of source material for this novel would be impossible to list; it would cover several pages. I have therefore limited it to a few books which I feel will have most interest for readers.

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